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SEPTEMBER

Weird Tales

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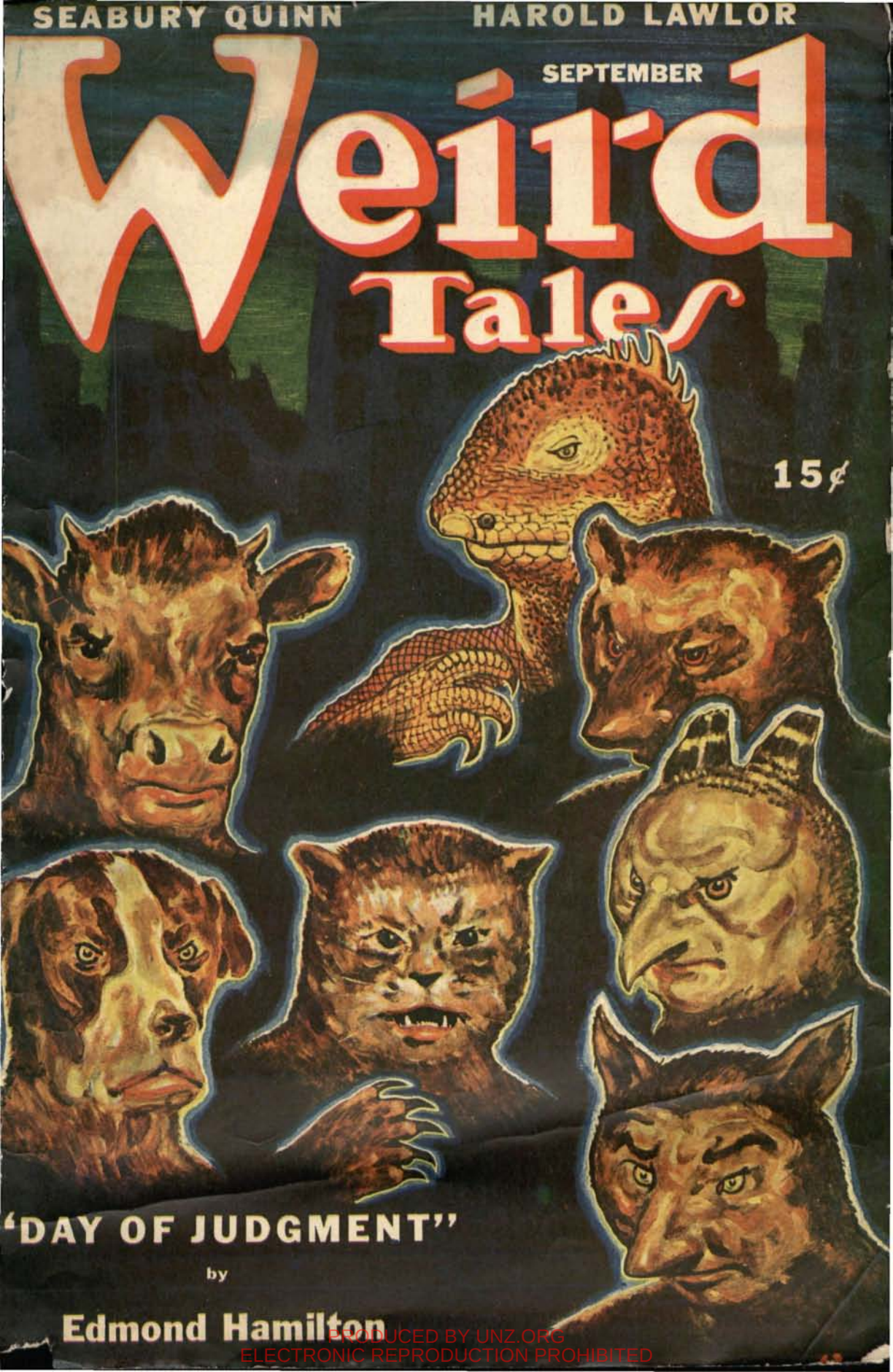

"DAY OF JUDGMENT"

by

Edmond Hamilton

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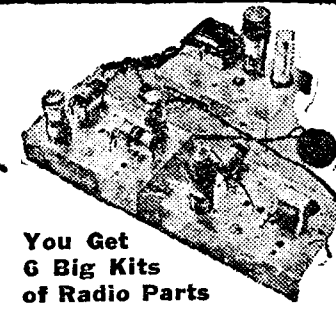

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Weird Tales

ALL STORIES NEW — NO REPRINTS

SEPTEMBER, 1946 Cover by Pete Kuhlhoff

NOVELETTE

LOTTE . . . . . Seabury Quinn 6

When a mystery presents itself it gnaws like a magot at the brain, nor can it be dislodged till the solution is found

SHORT STORIES

DAY OF JUDGMENT . . . . . Edmond Hamilton 20

Some day, some eternity away, there will be a last man and a last woman. And who will be their judgers?

ENOCH . . . . . Robert Bloch 28

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A tulka does not really live — therefore a tulka is indestructible. It cannot die

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A goat's horn, marvelously endowed with strange virtues and an unforgivable future

THE MACHINE . . . . . Allison V. Harding 54

A machine, so sensitive as to be human, was the scientist's goal. What he got was as utterly unexpected as it was horrific!

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The building's bizarre architecture was as though it had been lifted bodily and transported here from some haunted place deep in a mysterious Europe

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A small unpretentious hut, with an eternity of history and an unguessable secret within four walls of horror

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Except for personal experiences, the contents of this magazine is fiction. Any use of the name of any living person or reference to actual events is purely coincidental.

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D. McILWRAITH, *Editor.* LAMONT BUCHANAN, *Associate Editor.*

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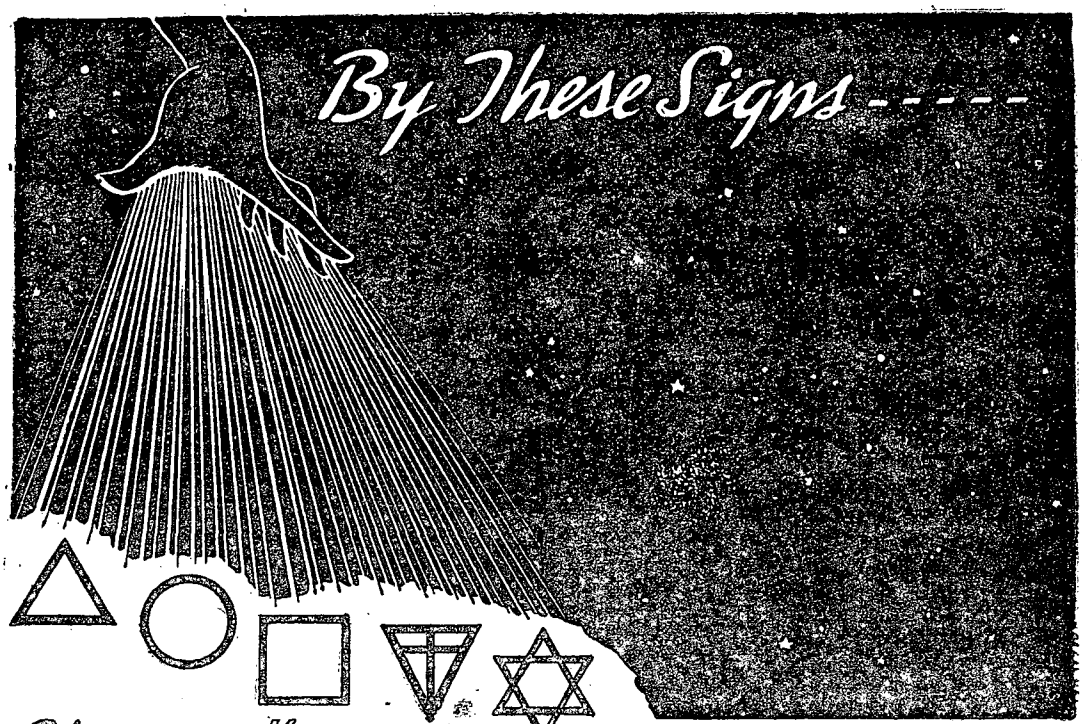

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ATTENTION HAGGARD FANS

AND attention also all you readers who enjoy an adventurous, fantastic story written in the swift-moving, inimitable style so distinctive of Sir H. Rider Haggard. His works have all the pulse quickening, attention commanding qualities of a good fantastic adventure story; with just the right amount of romance and realism to make them add up to the most entertaining stories ever written.

THE WINSOME PUBLISHING COMPANY has in preparation the *COMPLETE* works of H. Rider Haggard. The books, starting with "King Solomon's Mines," will be printed in a limited collector's edition of 3000 copies each. They will be printed in full 12 point black type on white winnebago, 50-lb eggshell and will be uniform in binding and format with a handsome full color title page. The binding will be in simulated tooled leather. The cover and tailboard will be embossed in gold in name and design. This is a set that any connoisseur of books will be proud to display on his bookshelves, and the complete set will be worth many times their cost in a few years as a rare collector's item. Each book will be advertised as soon as it goes to press and will sell for $3.50 per copy.

TO ANYONE who has ever read any of Haggard's works there is little that we can put into words in the nature of a critical analysis that will enhance the reader's opinion of the author. Indeed, there is little that even the most colorful literary critics of our time could put on paper that would really do justice to him. Born of a vivid and fertile imagination, his stories are so consistent in time, place, character and plot that they far surpass any books, written in the same fantastic romantic vein, that any of our contemporary authors have yet put forth. Were his name not on the title page one would not have to read far to realize that here was a story that was bound to fulfill the purpose of a fiction works to the *n*th degree: Namely, that of entertaining. Haggard's stories do much more than entertain. In a literal sense they actually transport the reader in mind and spirit into the lives, the sorrows, joys, trials and tribulations of their characters. By the mere act of turning a page one finds himself journeying down many a path laden with terror and studded with many a hardship both natural and supernatural and in searching out the many mysteries and forgotten bypaths of the ancient past. Were his name not on the title page one would undoubtedly think, so timely and true to type are the plots, that they were reading the works of a newly published man. But as his name is there, under the title, one does not have to ponder long over the merits of the author, for by the wholesome and vivid readability of his works Haggard has long since carved a niche for himself as one of the most satisfying fiction novelists of the entire English speaking nations. His works will go on record as the most durable and popular of the fiction world. Since his death in 1925 and since the printing of "King Solomon's Mines," in 1886, his stories have been issued and reissued many times over and by many different publishing companies, and yet, it is still virtually impossible to obtain any of his stories in second-hand form. To obtain them new IS an impossibility. Investigation shows that no complete edition of his works has been published in set form within the last twenty years. Just recently the WINSOME PUBLISHING COMPANY was formed with the express purpose of bringing back into a complete collector's edition, the complete and uncut works of Sir H. Rider Haggard. The members of this company, all recently returned veterans, have long been ardent, although sometimes futile, admirers and collectors of his works. Indeed, after many years of search of bookstores throughout the country and the expenditure of quite a good many dollars we have but just recently completed our collection. And a motley enough collection it is, what with its many and varicolored bindings in all different sizes and condition, ranging from one that looks as though it were just off the press despite its thirty some odd years, to one that has suffered sorely the ravages of time. To do justice to the works of this great author, and to do the book lovers everywhere a great service we are making arrangements with the copyright holders to publish in a limited, handsome collector's edition the complete works of Sir Haggard. So, you book lovers, assure yourselves and your children of many days and nights of reading pleasure by ordering the first title in this new edition today. You do not obligate yourself

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BELOW is a partial list of titles to be published, following publication of the first five herein listed, as soon as arrangements with original copyright holders have been completed.

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CLEOPATRA
NADA THE LILY
PEOPLE OF THE MIST
SWALLOW
LYSBETH
THE BRETHREN
FAIR MARGARET
GHOST KINGS
MORNING STAR
MAHATMA AND THE HARE
RED EVE
THE CHILD OF THE STORM
ALLAN AND THE HOLY FLOWER
FINISHED
WHEN THE WORLD SHOOK
SMITH AND THE PHAROAHS
WISDOM'S DAUGHTER
QUEEN OF THE DAWN
ALLAN AND THE ICE GODS
THE LADY OF THE HEAVENS
THEBES OF THE HUNDRED GATES
ALLAN'S WIFE
ERIC BRIGHTEYES
MONTEZUMA'S DAUGHTER
HEART OF THE WORLD
BLACK HEART AND WHITE HEART
PEARL MAIDEN
BENITA
VIRGIN OF THE SUN
THE YELLOW GOD
QUEEN SHEBA'S RING
THE LADY OF BLOSSHOLME
MARIE
THE WANDERER'S NECKLACE
THE IVORY CHILD
MOON OF ISRAEL
THE ANCIENT ALLAN
SHE AND ALLAN
HEU-HEU OR THE MONSTER
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Lotte

"LADIES and Gentlemen," the orchestra leader stepped to the edge of his dais, "Pablo and Francesca." On the heels of his announcment brass and woodwinds sounded a long chord, the hot erotic rhythm of a rumba started and a young man and woman glided out upon the dance floor of the Gold Room.

Jules de Grandin nibbled at a morsel of pink peppermint, washed it down with a sip of black coffee and wiped his lips with a

Heading by A. R. TILBURNE

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quick brushing motion, taking care not to disturb a blond hair of his trimly-waxed mustache. "Come, Friend Trowbridge, if you are finished let us call for *l'addition* and depart," he suggested. "Me, I have dined most excellently well, but this—" he glanced at the dancers circling on the polished oak —"*cela m'ennuie.* I am bored, me."

I nodded sympathetically. When one is on the shadowed side of fifty and hasn't danced in almost thirty years the tortions of a dance team leave him rather cold. Besides, the curtain at the Cartaret would rise in twenty minutes and a decent respect for the comfort of others demanded we be in our seats when the house lights lowered.

"Right with you," I agreed. "Soon as we can get that waiter's eye—"

"*Grand Dieu des petits porcs verts!*" his exclamation slashed through my words. Some small bright object, a prism from the chandelier above the dance floor, I thought, had flashed down like a minuscule meteor and crashed like a missile against the sleekly pomaded hair of the male dancer.

With me at his heels the small Frenchman wove his way between the tables and slipped across the polished oak boards of the dance floor. The blow had been surprisingly heavy for so small a projectile, and the young man was unconscious when we reached him. "Do not make yourself un-

Her father had been a headsman; she herself took naturally to the bloody work

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easy, *Mademoiselle,"* de Grandin whispered to his distrait partner. "We are physicians. We shall give him the assistance. He cannot be hurt badly—

"Hola, mon brave," he sank to his knees beside the young man. "You are making the recovery, no? Ah, that is good. That is very good, indeed!" as the youngster's lids fluttered up and he attempted to rise. *"Non, restez tranquille,* you will be completely well in one small moment." As a waiter passed he raised a finger. "A little brandy, if you please, and some ice water."

"Lottë," the patient whispered, then, recovering his poise, "What happened? Did I fall—"

"You did, indeed, *Monsieur,"* de Grandin assured as he held the pony of cognac to the young man's lips, then dipped the napkin in the bowl of ice water and laid the cold compress on the knot already forming over the boy's right temporal bone. "So, rest easily a moment." Methodically he took the patient's pulse, pursed his lips, then nodded shortly. "No bones are broken, nor is the skin ruptured. I would not suggest that you dance again tonight, but if you continue to improve—"

Mr. Melton, the hotel manager, had elbowed his way through the circling crowd. "What happened?" he demanded. "Was he drunk? I won't have drinkin' among the help, on duty or off. Get your traps packed and get out!" he ordered the young dancer curtly.

"Monsieur, I should not be too hasty were I in your most undoubtlessly tight shoes," de Grandin advised coldly. "The young man was stricken by a pendant falling from the chandelier. Dr. Trowbridge and I both saw it, and if he should decide to take legal action—"

"Oh, there won't be any trouble," Melton interrupted hastily. "Everything will be all right. Feel up to finishing the act, Paul?"

"Yeh, I—I guess so," answered the young man as he got to his feet a little unsteadily, shook his head like a fighter who has taken a heavy punch, and smiled reassuringly at his partner.

"Très bien," de Grandin nodded. "I do not think that you have received much hurt, *Monsieur,* but if you are not well entirely in the morning you should see a physician. If—" he glanced coldly at Melton—"there should be complications with the hotel, do not hesitate to call on me for testimony."

HE HANDED a card to the young man, bowed formally to the girl and led the way from the dining room.

"Friend Trowbridge, it is that I am puzzled," he confided as we drove toward the theatre.

"How's that?" I answered.

"That young man, Monsieur Pablo. You did observe his injury, *n'est-ce-pas?"*

"Of course, it was a simple bruise of the right temporal region with moderate ecchymosis. Nothing serious, I'd say, though it was surprising that so light an object as a pendant from the chandelier could have caused so much injury. I've seen bruises like that made by clubs or blackjacks—"

"Précisément. You have right there, my friend. But did you see him take his hurt?"

"Now that you mention it, no. I saw the missile hurtle through the air and saw him stagger and fall, but—"

"Exactment. But did you note the relative positions of Monsieur Pablo and the chandelier at the time?"

"No-o—"

"Ah-ha! That is enigma Number One. He was not under the fixture when he was struck. No. He was fifteen—possibly twenty—feet from it. The broken prism had to travel obliquely a distance of at least ten feet in order to strike him. What do you make from that, *hein?* Is it not against the laws of gravity?"

"You're sure?"

"But of course. Did not I see it?"

"It couldn't have been a strong draft—"

"Mais non. A wind sufficient to have hurled a bit of glass that distance, and with force enough to strike a man unconscious, would have to be of hurricane velocity."

"Ye-es. I suppose so."

"Indubitably. Moreover, when the so unfortunate young man revived from his swoon, what did he say?"

"I'm not sure, but it sounded like a woman's name—Lottë."

"You have entirely right, my old. And did it not seem to you he was frightened?"

"Well, now you speak of it, it did. But—"

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"No buts, if you will be so kind. Now for enigma Number Two: The young man was unconscious from a sudden violent blow, *n'est-ce-pas?* That means he had sustained a shock, which as you know amounts to relaxation or abolition of the controlling influence the nervous system exercises over vital organic functions. Yes. Pulsation should have been slowed down, and respiration much retarded. But were they? Not at all, by damn it. *Au contraire,* they were very much accelerated. He was frightened, very badly frightened, that one."

"You may be right," I agreed as I jockeyed the car into the last remaining parking space before the theatre, "but it seems to me you're making an Alp out of an anti-hill."

"*NON,*" he muttered moodily as we paused in the kitchen for a good-night snack, "I do not understand him, me."

"What the dickens are you maundering about?" I asked as I refilled his mug with beer. "At your confounded ghost-hunting again?"

"Not at all, by no means; quite the contrary," he denied, his mouth half full of cheese and biscuit, a foaming beer mug half-way to his lips. "This time I seek to dodge the specter, my friend. I wish to wipe my mind as blank as a dunce-schoolboy's slate, to dismiss all thought of the matter from my memory. But *hélas,* you know this Jules de Grandin. He annoys me. He is a very curious person. When a mystery presents itself it gnaws like a maggot at his brain, nor can he dislodge it till he has found its solution. *Ah bah,*" he shrugged his shoulders irritably. "I shall think of it no more. Let the devil worry over it. Me, I have the craving for eight hours sleep, and if I wake before—"

The sharp, insistent clamor of the door-bell sawed through his words like an alarm clock shattering sleep, and I sighed in vexation as I glanced at my watch. "Half-past one, and some idiot with a bellyache comes for a dose of paregoric."

A girl was standing in the vestibule, a slim slip of a thing in lustrous furs with a pale face from which dark eyes looked, dilated and frightened. "Is Doctor—the French gentleman here?" she asked tremulously. "Etienne, the *maitre d'hôtel* at the Gold Room said he knows about such things, and—"

"*Para servir á Vd. Señorita,*" broke in de Grandin in his best Spanish. In her changed costume, and with fright like a mask on her face, I had failed to recognize the girl, but as de Grandin spoke I realized she was the female member of the dance team we had seen at the Berkeley-York.

"Oh, sir," she knotted thin hands in a gesture of entreaty which somehow did not seem theatrical, "please help us! Etienne told us you know all about such things, and—may I bring Paul in? He's waiting in the taxi."

For the first time I noticed a cab parked at the curb, and at de Grandin's nod she dashed across the porch and down the steps and front walk, the spool heels of her sling-back sandals clattering on the cement.

She leant into the cab's darkness a moment, then emerged slowly, helping a young man to climb from the machine, steadying him with both arms as he tottered drunkenly up the walk. "Let me," I offered, taking the unsteady man's free arm. "He must have had a greater shock than we'd supposed."

De Grandin seized the patient's other arm and motioned to the girl to precede us and open the consulting-room door. "So," he murmured as we eased the young man into an armchair. "That is good, *Señor.* Very good, indeed. Now, let us have a look—*que diable?*" With quick, practiced fingers he had felt the youngster's head, examining not only the discolored area on the right temple, but feeling for an evidence of skull-fracture or *contre-coup* lesions. "What is it, *Señor?* You seem in fair condition physically, yet—". Abruptly he lowered his hands, felt the boy's neck just below the hairline, then took the patient's right hand in his own. I noticed how the lad's slim fingers closed convulsively upon the Frenchman's, clinging to them as a drowning man might grasp at a twig. An interne could have diagnosed nervous exhaustion bordering on neurasthenia.

"Strychnine?" I suggested.

"Brandy," he corrected. "A large dose, if you please, at least four ounces, Friend Trowbridge. Five or six would be more

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better. Fear is gnawing at his nerves like a starved wolf. We must relax him, break his inhibitions down, before we can determine what our treatment should be."

I BROUGHT the cognac and de Grandin held the goblet to the patient's mouth. "A little, so small sip," he directed. "*Très bon.* Now another—and another. Let them prepare the way for that which follows. Now, all at once, *Señor.* Gulp him, swallow him. Down with him all!"

The patient made a face as if he had ingested raw quinine instead of old cognac, but his reaction to the liquor was almost instantaneous. The hands which had been tensely clasped on the chair arms relaxed gradually, color seeped into his pale cheeks, and the drawn lines round his mouth became a little slack.

De Grandin beamed with satisfaction. "*Esta mejor?*" he asked.

The young man looked at him and the ghost of a smile hovered on his lips. "You needn't use that Spig talk to me, sir. I'm an American," he answered.

"American? *Mon Dieu!* But your names—"

"Oh, that!" the girl broke in with the suspicion of a giggle. "Pablo and Francesca are just our stage names. We're really Paul and Frances Fogarty."

"Irish?"

"As Paddy's pig, sir. Our accent—when we use it—is assumed for strictly business purposes, and is as phony as our stage names."

The little Frenchman grinned delightedly. "*Parbleu,* you carry it off well, *mes amis.* One would swear you are from Argentina, or, perhaps Mexico." He glanced appreciatively from one of them to the other.

They were, as he had said, extremely "South of the Border" in appearance. Paul Fogarty wore dinner clothes of extreme cut, trousers fitted snugly at the waist and hips with a series of vertical tucks and flowing to bell bottoms like those of a sailor, satin waistcoat drawn so tightly as to suggest a corset, and a jacket with sloping, close-fitting shoulders. His hair, worn rather long, was trained down his cheeks in sideburns and brushed straight back from the brow, plastered sleekly with pomade till it fitted his head like a skullcap of black patent leather.

The girl, too, was perfectly in character. Her hair was so intensely black it seemed to give off blue lights like a grackle's throat, and, defiant of the current fashion, it was cut short as a boy's. Like a boy's, too, it was parted far on the left side and plastered down with bandoline till it gleamed in the lamplight. Close-clipped manish sideburns descended her cheeks before her ears and were rendered more conspicuous by the heavy pendants of green jade that dangled from the small pierced lobes almost to her shoulders. Her dull-black satin gown clung to her narrow figure with such sheath-tightness that it had to be slit at the sides to give her room to step—and incidentally display slim, silk-smooth legs and miniature feet in high-arched sandals. The dress was long-sleeved and high-necked at the front, but left her back exposed almost down to the coccyx. The jade earrings and the synthetic emerald buckles of her sandals were her only ornaments, the carmine of her painted lips and the green lacquer on her toe-and fingernails were the sole spots of color in her ensemble. She was not beautiful or even pretty. Her features were too small and too irregular, but she was seductive in a strange way. She had little animal appeal, but her slender, almost boyish body, pale, thin face and scarlet lips had an appeal at once attractive and almost terrifying, like that of the fabled sirens—Circe in a Paris frock, Medea with Rue de la Paix accessories.

"You are perhaps *Monsieur* and *Madame* Fogarty?" de Grandin asked, "or is it *Monsieur* and *Mademoiselle?*"

"*Monsieur* and *Madame,* if you want it that way," the girl answered, as she gave him a languishing glance from dark eyes. Few women could resist de Grandin. "We're husband and wife. That's what's the matter."

"*Comment?*" he answered sharply. "'The matter,' *Madame?* Is it that you do not love each other?"

"No, sir, it's not that. We love each other till it hurts, but—"

"*Ah-ha!* That twenty-times-accursed but! What is it, Madame Fogarty? Perhaps I can help you—"

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"Did I say anything when I came out of it at the Gold Room?" young Fogarty cut in.

De Grandin turned to face him almost fiercely. "You did, indeed, *Monsieur*. You said, if I do not make the mistake, 'Lottë.' I assumed at the time you called upon *Madame* your wife. A man does such things in the half light of returning consciousness sometimes."

"That's the answer," Fogarty returned dryly. "I know it sounds as nutty as a pecan roll, but I'm—we're both—convinced she's at the bottom of the trouble. Etienne told us—"

"One moment, if you please," de Grandin raised a slim white hand. "The estimable Etienne can wait. It is of yourselves I wish to know. Begin at the beginning if you please, *Monsieur*, and omit nothing. If we are to help you we must know all, and all does not imply a part, or even most, but everything. He dropped into a chair, lit a cigarette and crossed his knees, staring at our visitor like a cat at a rat-role.

"OKAY, sir, if you want my life history," young Fogarty took a deep breath and an Irish grin broke through his carefully cultivated Latin exterior. "I'm a dancer; always been a dancer; never did anything else and never wanted to. Grampaw Donnally said that I was born with jingle-boxes in both feet, and I guess he hit it right, for I've never seen the time when music didn't make me want to prance. Before I'd left kindergarten I could do an Irish jig as well as anyone, by the time I'd reached grade school I'd learned to imitate George M. Cohan, Frisco and Pat Rooney. I was on the program every time there was an entertainment at church or school, and by the time I'd reached fourteen I was copping prizes regularly at amateur nights in the vaudeville houses.

"But I was a lousy student, and nothing but the truant officers kept me in school till I was sixteen, then I ran away and shipped on a freighter for South America, jumped ship at Buenos Aires and hung around until I managed to get a job as bus boy in the Café 25 de Mayo. In six months I'd picked up enough Spanish to be promoted to waiter. One night I got the orchestra leader drunk and chiseled a dance job out of him.

"That started it. They billed me under the name of Pablo, as an exponent of *las Danzas de América del Norte*, and my act went over pretty well, especially my imitations of Frisco's soft-shoe routines. But I knew it couldn't last, so every *centavo* I made above bare living expenses went into dancing lessons and I learned the works—tango, rumba, bolero, lulu-fardo, maxixe and seguidilla, as well as most of the folk-dances. I even took some ballet instruction, but that, like fencing lessons, was more for poise than actual use. Within a year I spoke Argentine Spanish well enough to pass for a native—among foreigners—and had a spot in the floor show at El Centro. While I was working there a German vaudeville agent named Hans Ewers saw me and offered me a job at the Café Zur Nekke in Berlin.

"It was there I met Lottë. I'd dropped into the Rixdorfer on my night off, thinking I might see some other act that would give me ideas, when she came on. I'd never seen anything like her. She was tall, tall as a tall man, slightly built, and with the small, cold, regular features that distinguish Saxon women from Prussians or Bavarians. In contrast to her cold, almost contemptuous face, her hair was flaming red. I don't mean russet or that shade of sepia we usually call red, but true flame-color, like molten copper in a crucible, and I knew instinctively that if she let it down it would reach to her knees. She had that white, almost transparent skin that sometimes goes with hair like that, and there was a bright, powdery dust of small gold freckles on her high cheekbones. Her eyes were a hot tortoise-shell, and in them I could see desire straining like a hound at the leash. There are people like that, you know. People to whom music, especially percussion, is intoxicating as an aphrodisiac, whose emotions almost burst the bounds of restraint when they dance. Lottë was one of them. She was drunk with the rhythm of the music, driven almost to frenzy by the movements of her own body.

"When she finished her turn she saw me watching her and came over to my table. I don't know just how to describe it; it

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seemed as if we were two chemicals that needed only to be brought together to explode with a heat like a bursting atom bomb. A thrill that was as sharp as a pang of pain shot through me as she dropped into the chair opposite, it nearly lifted the hair on my head; I know it made me positively dizzy. It wasn't what you could call love at first sight; it wasn't love at all. It was something terrifying, like bewitchment, and I knew as I looked into her eyes she had it, too.

"For almost an hour as we sat there drinking champagne mixed with cognac, and I don't believe in all that time either of us took his eyes off the other's. It was as if our gaze was magnetized. It wasn't that we didn't want to look away; we couldn't. When she finally rose to leave I followed her, walking like a drunken man, or one who has been hypnotized.

"Of course, we teamed up. Her contract at the Rixdorfer was about to finish the night I met her, and she joined me at the Café Zur Nekke."

YOUNG Fogarty took a deep, trembling breath and shivered like a man on whom a sudden chilling wind has blown. "Have you ever been possessed, sir? I mean that literally. Most likely you haven't, so I can't hope to make you understand how utterly I became enslaved. Lottë dominated me as completely—more so—as she did her pet dachshund Fritz. To say that I had no more privacy than a goldfish would be understating it. I had to be with her constantly—every moment. Even when I went to shave or wash my hands I had to leave the bathroom door open that she might see me; I had to give up having my hair cut at the Adlon barber shop and have one of the male *coiffeurs* at the beauty shop she patronized cut it, so she could be with me, and watch me the whole time. If a woman, no matter how old, smiled at me or spoke she was vixenishly jealous; she even resented my exchanging a word with another man or a child, and had to be present while I talked our routines over with the bandleader.

"I couldn't stand it, no man could. It was worse than being in prison. It was like being sewn up in a strait-jacket and gradually strangled. I loved her—if you want to call the fierce, unreasoning enchantment I was under love—but at the same time I hated her, and the hate was growing stronger than the love.

"It wasn't long before she felt the same way about me. We'd be lying side by side, sometimes kissing, sometimes in each other's arms, sometimes only hand in hand, when suddenly she'd jump up, call me *'dumkopf'* or *'schlemmiel'* and give me a contemptuous kick, or spit on me and slap my face. And when I'd leap up in a rage she'd fairly fling herself on me, twine both arms about me so I was helpless—for she was strong as a man in spite of her slenderness—and smother me with kisses.

"One of us surely would have killed the other if it had gone on much longer, but in 1940 the draft came and my number was one of the first called. 'I have to go,' I told her. 'If I don't I'll be an outlaw.'

"She stormed and screamed hysterically, went to her knees before me. 'Do anything you want with me,' she begged. 'Do you want to beat me? I'll go fetch the dog whip that I use on Fritz. Tear my skin with your teeth. Slash me with your razor—anything. Drink my blood; do whatever you care to, only don't leave me. Let them take the others to make war on the Führer. Stay with me. We can fly together to the mountains where no one will ever find us. I'll cook your food and wash your clothes and keep your house—be your servant, your slave—only don't leave me, *liebchen!*'

"But this was my chance for escape, and I wasn't letting it go by. 'I've got to go,' I repeated. 'This is more than either—or both—of us, Lottë. It's my country.'

"She threw her arms about my knees and pressed her cheeks against them, begging me to beat her, torture her, kill her, but not leave her, and when I finally managed to break free she fell face-forward on the floor and beat her forehead on it. The last I saw of her she lay full-length on the rug with her unbound red hair about her like a pool of blood, beating both fists on the carpet and screaming, 'You shall not leave me; I'll never let you go—never—never—*never!*'

"I was inducted as soon as I reached New York and went at once to training camp.

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Just before we sailed for England I met Frances at the USO. She was an entertainer, one of the best dancers I had ever seen, and when she heard I'd been a professional in civil life we were drawn together by our mutual interests.

"This time it was love, the real thing, not an unholy fascination.

"The entertainers weren't allowed to date with soldiers, but she gave me her address, and we corresponded regularly. We were married the day after my discharge and formed a team, using the Spanish form of our names—Pablo and Francesca. Fran hasn't been very well lately, and we're planning a vacation as soon as we've saved enough. I was stone-broke after almost six years in the army, and it cost my separation pay plus the few war bonds I'd managed to accumulate to outfit us. Costumes are expensive and don't wear very long."

DE GRANDIN nodded smiling. "I congratulate you on the thoroughness of your report, Monsieur Paul, but what of Fraulein Lottë? You said that you suspected her."

"So I do, sir. Listen: I wanted to forget Lottë as I'd forget a bad dream, but she kept a constant stream of letters flowing to me till Pearl Harbor and our entrance into the war. They were all in the same tone, how she loved me, idolized me, worshiped me, how she counted every heartbeat till we were together again, and every one ended with, 'You are mine and mine alone. I shall never let you go!'

"After we got in the war I lost touch with her, thank the Lord, and when I next heard of her it was through the Army scuttlebutt. The British had swooped down on Geirstein and caught the Jerries in the act of trying to liquidate three hundred prisoners before they could be freed to testify. From all accounts Geirstein was worse than either Buchenwald or Dachau, but like them it had both he- and she-devils in charge. The leader of the female *schwartzstaffelkorps* was a tall, redheaded woman said to be as beautiful as Helen of Troy and crueler than Countess Bathony. They laid more than two hundred deaths of helpless Jews and Poles and Czechs to her, but none of them had died outright, all died under torture supervised or actually inflicted by her. I was shocked but not too much surprised when I heard her name was Lottë Dalberg. Her father had been a *scharfrichter* or headsman, and I supposed she took naturally to the bloody work.

"She was tried and found guilty with the other members of the Geirstein staff. Two months ago we read she had been hanged." Young Fogarty paused, swallowed twice and reached for the now-empty brandy glass.

"*Mais certainement,* but of course," de Grandin volunteered and poured out a fresh potion of cognac. "And then?"

"Then it began. Fran and I were practicing a new routine. Come to think of it, it was the very day they hanged Lottë, but, of course, we didn't know about that then. Suddenly the stool was jerked from under Tony. Anthony Nusbaum is pianist in the band at the Gold Room and plays for our rehearsals. It couldn't have slipped. It was standing on a rug, not the bare floor, and Tony weighs at least two hundred pounds. If anything would hold that stool down as if it had been nailed he would, but there it was, halfway across the room, with Tony sitting on his fanny and looking surprised as a kid who'd just sat down on a pin put in his school seat.

"In a moment every pane of glass in the windows began rattling as if a gale were blowing, though we could see the trees dead still outside, and the light bulbs in the chandelier all popped. They didn't go out, they burst and shattered, as if they'd been squeezed by an unseen hand.

"Fran was wearing rayon slacks with deep cuffs for practice, and had caught her heel in one of them, giving it a nasty rip. She'd had her sewing basket out to mend the tear and left a needle sticking in the spool of thread and there were half a dozen more in a paper packet. Not loose, but stuck in the black paper, the way they come, you know. Just as the light bulbs popped those needles detached themselves and came darting through the air, every one of 'em sticking in my face. Six of 'em stuck half an inch into my cheeks and the threaded one thrust itself into my nose, trailing half a yard of linen string. You won't believe that, I know, but it's absolutely true."

"*Monsieur,*" de Grandin assured him, "I

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believe you implicitly. Proceed with your *précis*, if you please."

"WE HAVEN'T had much peace since, sir. Several times a day, and most especially at night, something like that occurs. Chairs, books, tables and even such heavy pieces of furniture as a piano are moved about, sometimes slowly, sometimes fairly thrown, and jewelry and other small objects are hurled through the air. The blankets are jerked off our beds while we're sleeping, our clothes are snatched off hangers and wadded on the wardrobe floor or tossed into the corners of the room, food is snatched off the stable before us. Only yesterday the whole tablecloth was jerked away as we were eating breakfast, spilling food and dishes over us and the floor."

"Bien oui," de Grandin murmured. "Thus far it runs entirely true to pattern. What else, if you please?"

"Last night I wakened at the sound of something scratching. When I got up and lit the light I saw a sentence taking form upon the wall of the bedroom. There was no pencil—nothing that could make the letters visible—but the scratching kept up steadily as words were spelled out against the paint."

"You could read them? They were not cryptic, like those showing on the palace wall at the feast of Belshazzar?"

"Yes, sir, I could read them, all right," grimly. "I recognized the writing, too. I'd seen it often enough."

"Ah, and it said—"

"Just what I'd read in half a hundred letters from Lottë, the sentence with which she always ended: 'You are mine and mine alone. I shall never let you go.' "

"Parbleu," de Grandin began, but got no further, for, apparently from the floor of the consulting room there came a deafening, clanging, banging racket, like a tin can bumping over cobbles at the tail of some luckless mongrel, and out of empty air, apparently some six feet overhead, burst a mocking, maniacal laugh.

The silence fairly beat upon our ears as the unholy racket stopped abruptly as it had begun, and Fogarty smiled bleakly. "You get used to it in time," he said wearily. "You saw that broken prism from the chandelier hit me tonight. You know it didn't fall on me; you know that it was thrown."

"I do, indeed, *Monsieur.*"

"Then look at this." The boy stripped back his jacket cuff and shirt sleeve. On his bared forearm, apparently scratched with some sharp instrument, was an intricately wrought, but easily decipherable, monogram: "L. D." "Tonight she put her brand on me. Now see this." From his jacket pocket he drew out a folded handkerchief and spread it on the table before us. Smeared on the linen, apparently with lipstick, was a seventeen-word message: "Pablo you are mine to torment and to kill I shall do both in my good time." The writing was bold, ill-formed, angular, the sort of writing one accustomed to use German script might use to write English.

"And this came—?" de Grandin arched the slim black brows which were such a vivid contrast to his blond hair and mustache.

"Tonight, after we'd done our last turn. Fran was making up her mouth when the lipstick was snatched out of her hand and the handkerchief from my breast pocket. Next instant handkerchief and lipstick were flung into the far corner of the dressing room. When we picked 'em up we found this."

"Tiens," the little Frenchman began, then, *"Sacré nom!"* as he ducked his head. With a sharp click the key had turned in the lock of the instrument case that stood by the farther wall, the glass door swung open and from the upper shelf a lancet rose, shot like an arrow from a bow in low parabola and sped whirring past his head, missing his cheek by the bare fraction of a centimeter as it flashed across the room to bury itself a full inch in the wall.

"Nom, de nom, de nom, de nom, de sacré nom!" he swore savagely. "No twenty-times-accursed *fantôme,* no never-quite-to-be-suffciently-anathematized *lutin* shall throw a knife at Jules de Grandin and boast of the exploit. *Madamoiselle la Revenante,* I am annoyed with you. I take your gauntlet up. I accept your challenge, me. *Parbleu,* but we shall see who makes a monkey out of whom before this business is finished!"

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HE LOOKED from one of us to the other, the sharp vertical wrinkles of a frown of concentration etched between his brows. "My friends, I think I have the diagnosis, but as to treatment, *tenez,* that is another matter. Friend Trowbridge, have you not noted one constant factor in these so untoward happenings?"

"Why—" I temporized. "Why—"

"Not why, but what," he corrected with a quick grin. "Think, concentrate, meditate, if you will be so kind."

"H'm. The only condition common to all these occurrences as Mr. Fogarty has related them seems to be that he and his wife have been together—"

"Bravo! Bravissimo!"

"But of course, that could have no earthly bearing on—"

"Name of a small blue man, has it not so? I tell you it is diagnostic, my friend."

"I fail to see—"

"Précisément, exactement; quite so. Permit that I instruct you. Across the Rhine in that dark country which has spewed war twice upon the world in one generation they have some words which are most expressive. Among them is *poltergeist,* which signifies a pelting ghost, a ghost which flings things round the house and plays the stupid, childish tricks. More often he is not a ghost at all in the true sense, he is some evil entity which plagues a man or more often a woman. Not for nothing did the old ones call the Devil Prince of the Powers of the Air, for there are very many evil things in the air which we can no more see than we can see the micro-organisms of disease. Yes, it is so." He nodded solemn affirmation.

"This one, I damn think, however, are a true ghost, the earthbound spirit of a human creature tainted with the deadly sins of lust and murder. Also, it are a *poltergeist* of the first water.

"For why? Why should it not come back as an ordinary specter, sighing, weeping, wailing, crying, manifesting itself through the appreceptive senses rather than as a *poltergeist,* a pelter, a mover-around-of-furniture?

"You ask it? *Pardieu,* I shall tell you! The usual, ordinary haunting-ghost may make a noise, often a most unpleasant noise, and sometimes, with or without the aid of a medium, manifest itself visually. It may raise the hair upon the head of the beholder, frighten him until he is well-nigh witless, but that appears to be about the limit of its powers. It does not fling crockery, it does not move the furniture about, it does not exercise the physical force. The *poltergeist* does so. You apprehend? You follow me? Of course.

"This Lotte Dalberg was a very wicked woman. She was a bloodstained wanton who paid with her life for her crimes. And death has not reformed her. She would torment, injure, perhaps kill the man who had escaped her in life. And in order that she may have power to exercise the *violence physique* she comes back as a *poltergeist.* Yes, certainly; of course.

"Very well, then. Experience with such things shows some agent is essential for the *poltergeist's* activities. The agent, who may be, and usually is entirely innocent of all evil intent, is almost always one possessing some physical or mental abnormality. She are often a young girl in her teens, less often a boy of the same age, sometimes an old or sick person, perhaps a cripple whose vitality is low.

"You begin to comprehend? Monsieur Fogarty has told us that *Madame* his wife is unwell, that they wait only to accumulate a little money before they take a long vacation. *Madame,"* he bowed to the girl, "you have consulted a physician? He has diagnosed your illness?"

"Yes," tremulously, "he said I'm suffering from anemia. Things had gotten pretty bad for me before the war. Vaudeville had just about disappeared, there weren't enough floor shows to give employment to a tenth of the dancers 'at liberty.' I had to take what I could get. I was a taxi dancer at the Posieland Dance Hall—five cents a dance and a ten percent commission on the drinks I vamped the patrons into buying. For more than a year I ate ten-cent breakfasts and luncheons; if I had enough to dine at the steam table at the Automat I thought I was in luck. Something has to give way when you starve all day and dance all night, you know, sir."

"Mordieu, tu parles, ma petite pauvre," he answered with a gleam of sympathy in his eyes. "You have said it, truly. But so it

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is. The so unpleasant workings of this naughty *poltergeist* undoubtedly are conditioned by your presence."

"You mean—" there was stark panic in the girl's cry—"you mean that *I'm* responsible—"

"Not at all, by no means, *Madame*. I mean the *poltergeist* works through, not with you. The movement of objects and the application of violence without the use of any physical force known to science is technically known as telekinesis. The *poltergeist* accomplishes it by means of an imponderable substance called teleplasm, which is akin to, though not the same as the ectoplasm or psychoplasm exuded by the medium at a spiritualistic séance. Now, neither the mind nor that discarnate entity we call a ghost for want of more exact terminology can affect matter without the influence of a human intermediary. You, *Madame*, are that. It is from you that this entirely detestable spirit-thing derives the necessary teleplasm. Yes.

"But should you blame yourself? *Bien non*. No more than the unfortunate householder whose home has been ravaged by a burglar. Indeed, the simile is apt. You have not given her the teleplasm; she has stolen it from you."

"Then what are we to do? Must Paul and I separate—"

He held a slim hand up for silence. Permit me, *Madame*. I think, I concentrate; I cogitate."

At length: "I would suggest you spend the night apart, my friends. The farther the better. One of you should take the train for Philadelphia and stop at some hotel. The other should remain here. Tomorrow night, if all goes well, we shall attempt an experiment. I make no promises, but we shall see what we shall see. Yes. This Fraulein Lottë Dalberg has affronted me. She has thrown a knife at me. I am insulted, and I do not suffer insult placidly. If one thing fails we shall essay another, and another until we strike upon the proper one. Yes, I have said it, me."

IT WAS shortly after four o'clock next afternoon when we knocked at the door of the suite occupied by Paul and Frances Fogarty at the Berkeley-York. "And how were things last night?" de Grandin asked as Paul let us in.

"A little better, thank you," answered Fogarty. "I went to Philadelphia as you suggested. Fran stayed here, and aside from a bad dream I had no trouble."

"A bad dream? Like what, Monsieur Paul?"

"I dreamed I was some place, I don't quite know where, but it was probably a mountain top, for everything was shrouded in a heavy mist, and yet there was a wind blowing. It was intensely cold, and I felt very lonely. At last I couldn't stand it any longer and called for Fran."

"And then?"

"I got no answer, but when I called a second time I saw a figure coming slowly toward me through the fog. When it came closer I saw it was Lottë. She was wearing a long scarlet robe, and her hair, as red as the silk of her gown, hung down about her. Her arms were bare, so were her head and feet, and every time she took a step a flash of flame came from the ground where she had trod, and a little puff of yellow smoke accompanied it. It had an odd, nose-tickling smell, like that you get when you put a match to your cigarette before the sulphur has quite burned away."

"U'm," Jules de Grandin commented. "One need not be a Freud or Jung or Stekel to interpret the symbolism of that dream. What next, if you please?"

"I tried to run away, but had no power to move. It was as if I'd suddenly been turned to stone. No, not quite that, either. It was more as if I'd suddenly been paralyzed. I was entirely conscious, but powerless to move. I couldn't even shut my eyes, or take them off her as she walked toward me with a kind of gloating smile on her face. But I could feel my heart beating and the breath hissing in my throat. A bird must feel something like that when a snake creeps up on it.

"She came up to me and put both hands on my shoulders, while she looked straight in my eyes. 'I'm burning, Pablo,' she told me, 'burning for you. Soon I shall burn with you.' Then she kissed me.

"I felt her mouth against my mouth and the light nip of her sharp teeth on my lips, and a mist as red as blood—red as her robe

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and her hair—blinded me. I felt as if I were sinking into some dream-scented fog, half conscious, half unconscious, like a patient on the operating table when the ether is applied and the doctor tells him to begin counting: One—two—three. Then suddenly the fog caught fire, and I was burning, too. Flames leaped and roared and hissed about me, stripping the skin off my flesh and the flesh from my bones. The agony of it was almost past endurance, and yet—yet—"

"*Précisément, Monsieur,*" de Grandin supplied. "And yet you found the torment in a sense delightful. Even the damned in hell have some pleasures. One takes it that you awoke then?"

"I woke up in what seemed a raging fever, yet I was shaking as with a severe chill."

"And not one little minute too soon, either, *mon jeune.* Me, I think that was no ordinary dream you had. It was a vision, and one which might well have ended in disaster. Tell me," his face showed sudden concern, "you did not speak to her, you did not make her any promise, or declare your love or express rapture at the embrace?"

"No, sir."

"That is good. That is very fortunate, indeed. Poor, weak, finite human nature has its limitations, and the powers of hell are very strong. It seems that not content with doing you physical injury this vile one now would steal away your soul. She is a very naughty person, that one."

Abruptly he turned to Frances Fogarty. "*Madame!*"

"Yes, sir?"

"Attend me, if you please." From his waistcoat pocket he drew a short length of silken cord from which dangled a bright silver disc about the size of a dime. "See him," he ordered. "Is he not a pretty thing?"

SLOWLY, like a pendulum, he swung the bright disc back and forth. Frances watched it, fascinated. "Sleep, Madame Françoise," he commanded softly. "Sleep. The clock is ticking; tick—tock; tick—tock. Slowly, very slowly, it is counting off the second, *ma petite.* Tick-tock. You are weary, very, very weary; you are tired, you long for sleep. Sleep is what you most desire, it is not? Tick—tock; tick—tock!"

The girl's eyes wavered back and forth, following the arc of the bright disc, but as he droned his monotone they became heavy-lidded, finally closed. Her slender bosom rose and fell convulsively a time or two, then regular soft breathing told us she was sleeping. He bent above her, pressing gentle fingers on her lids. "You are asleep, Madame Françoise?"

"I am asleep," she answered drowsily.

He turned from the girl to her husband. "It is expedient that you join her, Monsieur Paul."

"You mean you want to hypnotize me?"

"Perfectly."

"O.K. I'll take a chance." He dropped into a chair beside his wife, settled his head comfortably and smiled tiredly. "Hope this works, sir," he muttered.

Once more de Grandin swung the shining silver disc, once more his soothing monotone commanded sleep. In something less than five minutes Paul was slumbering peacefully.

"Madame Françoise?" the Frenchman called softly. No answer came, and he repeated the summons. At last a sleepy little murmur like the whimper of a half-roused child responded. "The hypnosis is deep," he whispered, then aloud to the girl, "I am your master am I not, Madame Françoise?"

"You are my master."

"You will obey my command?"

"I will obey you."

"Then I command you to forget all thought of Lottë Dalberg. Dismiss her from your mind and memory, utterly, completely, wholly. As far as you are concerned there was never any such person. Her name if heard will evoke no memories pleasant or unpleasant. It will be the name of a stranger, never heard before. You understand?"

"I understand."

"You will obey?"

A long pause followed, then: "Madame Françoise, who is Lottë Dalberg?" he asked sharply.

"Lottë Dalberg?" sleepily. "I never heard of her. Should I know her?"

"No, emphatically no, my little."

He swung round to the sleeping Paul and repeated the commands he had given

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Frances. Then, five minutes later, "Who was Lottë Dalberg, Monsieur Paul?" he asked.

"She was—" the young man seemed to grope for an answer, then, slowly, like one trying to recall a half-forgotten snatch of poetry—"she was a German girl whom I met in Berlin. I loved her—hated her—"

"*Non, par la barbe d'un bouc vert,* you shall not say it!" de Grandin cut in savagely. "Attend me, Monsieur Paul: She was no one. She never had existence. There was never such a person. Do you understand?"

"I—I think so."

"Good. Now, who was Lottë Dalberg, Monsieur Paul?"

"I don't know."

"Think; think hard, my Paul. Who was she? Do not you recall your days and nights together in Berlin, the kisses and the vows of never-dying love?"

"No."

"You cannot recall her?"

"Who?"

"What was her name?"

"Whose name?"

"*Très bien.*" He turned to me, his little round blue eyes agleam. "I damn think that does it—"

"What's that?" I interrupted, seizing him by the elbow and spinning him around. "There, on the wall?"

SOMETHING like a water-stain was forming on the green-painted plaster. It grew, expanded, lengthened, widened till it was the silhouette of a female figure standing on tiptoe facing us. Tiny lines of red like veins began to show within the outline of the stain. Some were heavy, some lighter, and together they traced out a pattern like a line drawing crudely executed in red pigment.

The thing was like a five-pointed star, the widely outspread legs its lower points, the upstretched, outspread arms its upper ones, the head, thrust forward, the apex. Now we could see the snaky locks of red hair rippling unbound down the brow and neck and shoulders, reaching almost to the knees; the long and tapered arms uplifted as in evocation, the wide-opened and staring eyes, glaring at us in malevolent fury.

"*Hola,*" de Grandin greeted mockingly. "*Comment vous portez-vous, aujourd'hui,* Fraulein Lottë?—how are you?"

The red-etched picture seemed to struggle to free itself from the wall. Grotesquely, horribly, it was like some enormous beetle enmeshed on a sheet of flypaper. He laughed sarcastically. "It is no use, *Fraulein.* Two dimensions are the most you can achieve; soon there will be none."

He dropped his bantering tone and voice and eyes were hard as he proceeded: "Unquiet spirit of the unrepentant dead, go forth. You have said to the grave, 'Thou art my lover, in thy arms will I lie,' and to Death, 'Thou art my father and my mother.' The cord of memory and fear by which you held these ones is broken; your power over them is ended. Save in the memories of those who hate you and the records of the court that tried and sentenced you to death there is no thought or mention of your name. Oblivion has claimed you. You are swallowed up, wiped out; extinct. Now get you gone to that place prepared for you, and may your scarlet sins find pardon in the end. Avaunt, be gone; *te conjuro, abire ad tuum locum!*"

The simulacrum on the wall began to fade like a picture projected from a magic lantern when the light behind it dims, became a featureless shadow, a dull, amorphous stain—nothing.

"*Bien,*" de Grandin dusted one hand on the other. "That is indubitably that, Friend Trowbridge."

To the sleeping couple he called softly: "*Monsieur* and *Madame,* sleep until the time has come to rise and work, but forget all that has transpired. You never heard of Lottë Dalberg, have no recollection of the persecution with which she plagued you, never have you seen or heard of Jules de Grandin or his friend Dr. Samuel Trowbridge. All, all has been forgotten, *mes amis. Adieu.*"

He opened the door softly and we stepped out into the hall.

"NO," he denied as we finished dinner that night, "I would not call it intuition, my friend. It was rather tentative and impractical. Consider, if you please:

"This thing which haunted Monsieur Fogarty was in the nature of a *poltergeist,*

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but it were not a true one. While it moved furniture and hurled light objects it had none of the droll mischievousness of the true *poltergeist,* who, while he often proves annoying, even dangerous, is a species of a ghostly clown who plays his Puckish tricks without much rhyme or reason. This naughty one had a very definite reason for everything she did, she was unquestionably bent on persecuting Monsieur Fogarty, perhaps eventually on killing him. Because she sought to do him physical injury by physical means she resorted to the form of *poltergeist,* and so the pattern of her actions—and her limitations—were those of that species of a ghost.

"Very well. We determined Madame Françoise was the agent through which the so wicked Fraulein Lottë operated, the reservoir of her supply of teleplasm without which she had no power for violence. *Très bien.* What then?

"It is an axiom of the occultist that this teleplasm is what you call idioplastic, that is, it takes its appearance, its seeming, from the thoughts of those among whom it operates. Both Monsieur and Madame Fogarty knew and hated Lottë Dalberg, and with excellent reason. That gave her a hold on their minds. When she appeared to Monsieur Paul in Philadelphia last night she was knocking at the door of his subconscious, seeking to insinuate herself into his brain as well as do him bodily injury through external force.

"Now, I ask me, 'Jules de Grandin, are you afraid of the spirit of this most unpleasant young woman who has died upon the gallows for her murders and undoubtlessly is most uncomfortable at present for her other sins?' 'Damn no, Jules de Grandin,' I reply to me. 'I am ashamed of you that you should ask such a question.'

"Very well, suppose we hypnotize this poor, tormented couple, make them not afraid, even not aware, of Lottë Dalberg. What then?

"Hypnotism, in the last analysis, is nothing but the substitution of the operator's mind for that of the subject. In a measure, by fear and memory, the *revenant* had substituted her intelligence for that of Monsieur Paul and Madame Françoise. So what did I do? I thrust my mind into their brains, *pardieu,* and made them unafraid and even unaware of her. Thereafter, she had no place to go. She could not make them fear her, they had completely forgotten her. It was as if she had been trespassing in their brain-house when *pouf!* along comes Jules de Grandin and evicts her.

"But though they had forgotten her in their hypnotic sleep I had not. I thought of her, and there was still sufficient teleplasm to enable her to take feeble form as a picture on the wall. She was a fearsome, frightening sight, *n'est-ce-pas?* Ha, but she chose the wrong one for her frightening! Me, I told her which was what in no uncertain terms. I told her all her power was gone, that she was as forgotten as last year's bird's nest. Her last remaining ligamentary tie with earth was snapped. She had no place to go but outer darkness."

"You don't think she'll come back?"

"I do not, my friend. What was it that she said to Monsieur Paul in his vision? 'I burn'? *Parbleu,* I think that is exactly what she does.

"And me, I also burn. My throat is dry, my tongue is parched, my lips are all afire. Will you not have the goodness to refill my glass, Friend Trowbridge?"

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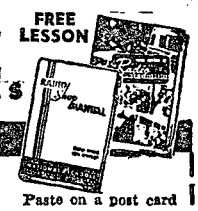

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Day of Judgment

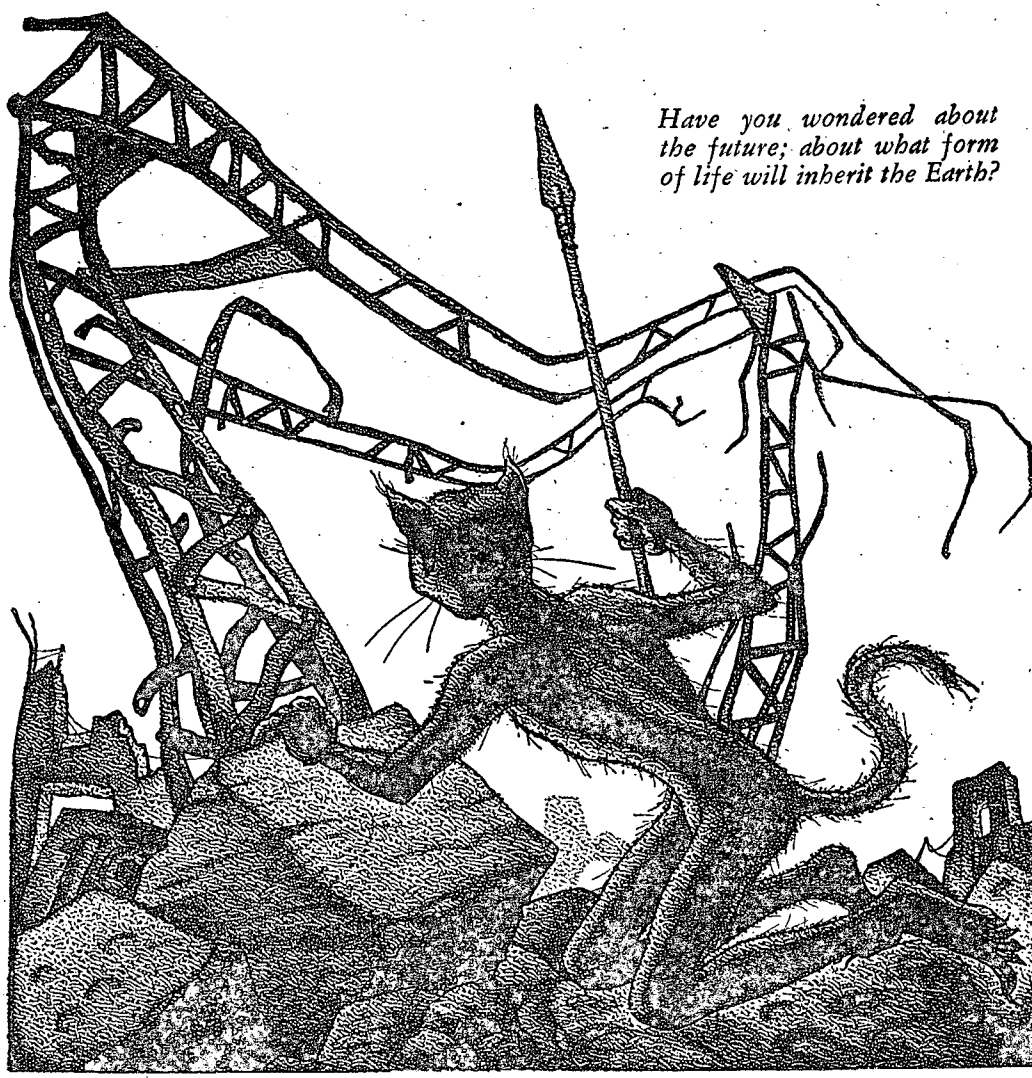
BY EDMOND HAMILTON

HAHL froze like a living statue in the moonlit forest as he heard a quick stir in the underbrush just ahead.

He raised his short, heavy spear ready for instant use, and listened. The sighing wind lazily stirred branches and made the dappled moonlight on the ground waver. Then he heard the stir again, this time a little closer.

"One of the Clawed Clan," thought Hahl, wonderingly. "Why is he this far east?"

Hahl looked manlike, but he was not a



Have you wondered about the future; about what form of life will inherit the Earth?

Heading by BORIS DOLGOV

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man. There were no men left on earth to walk these woods.

He was a stocky, erect figure whose body was covered with long brown hair. His head was not anthropoid but was a curiously elongated skull in whose dark muzzle-face his bright eyes gleamed watchfully.

Long white teeth showed as he breathed quickly, his pink tongue flashing. Despite his erect posture, spear and hide girdle, there was something very doglike about him.

Nor was that strange, for Hahl's people, the Hairy Clan, had been true canine quadrupeds not many generations before.

A hissing, whining voice suddenly called to him out of the thick underbrush ahead.

"Who comes? Greeting and peace from S'San of the Clawed Clan!"

Hahl answered. "Hahl of the Hairy Clan! Greeting and peace!"

At the reassuring formula, there emerged quickly from the brush the possessor of that hissing, challenging voice.

S'San of the Clawed Clan was also erect and manlike but he was as obviously of feline ancestry as Hahl was of canine.

His smooth-furred, tawny figure, sharp-pricked ears, luminous green eyes and taloned hands and feet were eloquent of his descent from the great cats of the previous age.

These two spoke quickly together in the meagre tongue used by all the forest clans, though it sounded differently in S'San's hissing voice than in Hahl's short, barking accents.

"You venture far east, brother!" Hahl was saying in surprise. "I expected to meet no one this near the great water."

"I have been far east, indeed!" exclaimed S'San. "I bring news of wonder from the place of Crying Stones!"

Hahl was dumfounded by amazement. If there was one place in all these forests that the Clans never approached, it was the Crying Stones.

That weird place by the sea was haunted —haunted by memory of ancient horror and fear. Even Hahl had only dared look upon it from a great distance.

"You have been to the Crying Stones?" he repeated, staring wonderingly at S'San.

The cat-man's green eyes flashed. "Only to the northern ridges, but from there I could see clearly. It was earlier tonight. The stones were not crying, so I dared approach that close.

"Then, as I watched, I saw a terrible thing happen. A star fell from the sky toward the Crying Stones! It fell quite slowly, flaming very bright, until it rested amid the stones. But resting there, it still shone. I hastened to bring the news to all the Clans!"

Hahl's deep brown eyes were wide with wonder. "A star falling from the sky? What does it mean? Does it mean that the world will burn up again?"

"I do not know," muttered S'San. "But others may know. Trondor of the Hoofed Clan is wisest of us all. Let us take this news to him."

"First, I must see this fallen star for myself!" Hahl declared.

The cat-man showed reluctance. "It is a long way back to the Crying Stones. It would take us hours."

Hahl argued, "Unless another than yourself sees it, the Clans may not believe you."

That argument won over S'San. "I will go back with you. We can follow back my own trail."

Silently as shadows, the two dissimilar figures started in a run through the moonlit forest. The springy bounds of the cat-man and the shorter, loping strides of Hahl carried them forward at an even, easy pace.

THE forest was stirring about them to the rising wind, the patter of checkered shade and moonlight dancing and wavering. From far away to the west, the wind brought them once the faint echoes of a deep-voiced hunting-call.

Hahl's keen senses perceived every sight and sound as they ran, but his thoughts were wrapped in wonder. He had always been deeply, if fearfully, interested in the Crying Stones. And now this marvel—a star falling upon them from the sky!

They changed direction, moving southward now through the forest. Presently they came to an open ridge from which they could look far southward in the moonlight.

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S'San halted, pointed with his taloned hand. "Look! The star still shines!"

Hahl peered frozenly. "It is true! A star shining upon the ground!"

They were looking southward along a long, narrow island enclosed by arms of the moonlit sea. The island bore scattered trees and brush, but most of it was heaped with queerly geometrical masses of blackened, blasted stone.

A long way southward there was an oblong open space amid the rectangular masses of blackened stone, and from there shone a brilliant light that was indeed like a bright star fallen from the sky.

As Hahl and S'San peered, the west wind strengthened. And as it blew through those towering masses of shattered black stone, there came through the moonlight the mournful, swelling, wailing sound that had given this place its name.

S'San crouched tensely with hair bristling, and Hahl gripped his spear more tightly as that wailing anthem smote their ears.

"The stones cry out again!" whispered the cat-man. "Let us return!"

But Hahl remained rooted. "I am going down there! I must see that star more closely."

It took all his courage to make and announce the decision. Only his intense interest in the shining wonder down there overcame his instinctive dread of this place.

"Go into the Crying Stones? Are you mad?" demanded S'San. "This place is still cursed with the evil of the Strange Ones!"

Hahl shivered slightly, and almost forsook his intention. But he summoned his courage.

"The Strange Ones have been dead a long time, and cannot harm us now. You can wait here until I return."

Instantly, pride flared into S'San's green eyes. "Shall the Hairy Clan venture where the Clawed Clan dares not? I go with you into this madness."

Madness indeed it seemed to Hahl's whirling mind as he and the cat-man began their tense journey down into the somber place.

The ancient horror of the Strange Ones had risen to grip him. Old, old in all the forest clans, was that deep horror. Even though the Strange Ones had vanished from Earth in the catastrophe of long ago, the dread of them still haunted the forest folk.

And this weird place of towering, blackened stones that cried to the wind had been the lair of the Strange Ones before they and the old age ended. Tradition of that had kept this spot shunned always.

Yet Hahl went on, driven by his eager interest, and the cat-man's pride kept him with him. They came to the narrow river that bounded the northern end of the island. Hahl plunged in and swam strongly. S'San, with all his Clan's aversion to water, followed gingerly.

THEY clambered ashore and now were among the Crying Stones. Gaunt, mournful in the moonlight, rose the blackened, shattered masses that wailed so heartbreakingly in the wind.

"This trail leads straight south toward the place where the star shines," Hahl murmured. "We can get very close."

The trail was straighter than any forest trail, and was intersected and paralleled by other straight trails through the stones.

Louder, louder, rose the wail of wind among the looming stone masses, deep and solemn as a requiem. Hahl felt the hair on his back lifting to the sound.

They entered the oblong clearing in which were no masses of stone. Through the trees, the star upon the ground shone very brilliantly as they stole toward it. They finally crouched in a thicket only a spear-cast from it.

"It is no star!" whispered S'San, amazedly. "But what is it?"

"I do not know," Hahl murmured, staring. "I have seen nothing like it."

The object at which they stared was clearly visible in the bright moonlight. It glinted metallically, a big thing like an elongated egg whose sides were scarred and battered. It was so large that it bulked as high as the smaller trees.

Hahl perceived that the brilliant, star-like light came from an opening in the side of the metal bulk. Then his keen ears caught a slight sound.

"There is someone inside the thing!" he told S'San in a tense whisper.

"There could not be!" the cat-man pro-

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tested. "None in all the Clans would dare enter such a—"

"Listen!" murmured Hahl. "Whoever it is, is coming out!"

They crouched, watching. A figure appeared in the lighted opening, slowly emerging.

It was not one of the forest folk, that erect figure. It was shaped much like Hahl and S'San, but its body was covered by close-fitting garments, its head was different, its face pink, flat and hairless.

"By the Sun!" whispered S'San, quivering wildly. "It is one of the Strange Ones of long ago!"

Hahl felt frozen by horror. "The Strange Ones who burned up the world! They've returned!"

Stupefaction held the two. All their lives, the tradition of the mad Strange Ones of the past who had almost destroyed the world before they destroyed themselves, had been told by the Clans.

It had been a terror of long ago, a dim tale of ancient dread. But now, suddenly, that terror was real.

Hahl watched, shivering. The Strange One there in the moonlight was acting queerly. He stood, looking at the somber black masses of stone that rose in the moonlight, listening to the wailing wind.

Then the Strange One hid his face in hands. A low sound came from him.

"He is weeping," whispered Hahl, incredulously.

"There is another—a she!" hissed S'San.

A second Strange One, a softer female figure, had come out of the big metal object. She put an arm around the weeping man.

"Quick, we must escape from here and warn the Clans!" whispered S'San tautly.

Hahl started to back with him through the thicket. But in his stupefied state of mind, he forgot to place his feet carefully.

A twig snapped. The man out in the moonlight jerked up his head, and swiftly drew a metal tube from his belt.

"Run for it!" cried S'San instantly.

The two plunged out of the thicket. At sight of them, the man and woman in the moonlight cried out in terror and the man levelled his tube.

A flash of light darted from it and struck both the fleeing two. Hahl felt a violent shock, then darkness.

HAHL awoke with sunlight on his face. He stirred and sat up, then uttered a howling cry of surprise and dismay.

He was in a small room with metal walls, its doorway closed by heavy wire netting. S'San was just awaking also, beside him.

"We are in the big metal thing of the Strange Ones!" cried Hahl. "They stunned us, captured us!"

S'San's feline rage exploded. The cat-man hurled himself at the netting, clawing furiously. Hahl joined him.

In both of them was the violent repulsion of free forest folk who found themselves for the first time trapped and prisoned.

"I knew when we saw the Strange Ones that they had come back to bring more evil to the world!" raged S'San.

He and Hahl suddenly stopped their vain attack on the netting and crouched back. The two Strange Ones had appeared outside the barrier.

The man and woman seemed young. They stood, looking in apparent wonder at the two dissimilar captives, the hairy dog-man and his blazing-eyed companion of the Clawed Clan.

"They will kill us now!" hissed S'San. "They always brought death, wherever they went."

"They do not *look* so cruel," Hahl said uncertainly.

For Hahl, despite his dread, could not feel the hatred and rage toward their captors that the cat-man did. Something deep in Hahl tugged strangely at his spirit as he stared at the Strange Ones.

The man outside the netting spoke to the woman. Hahl could not understand. But the sound of the voice somehow soothed him.

Food was brought and put through a hole in the barrier. S'San furiously refused it at first. But after a time, he too ate of it.

The Strange Ones then began earnestly to speak to the two prisoners. They held up pictures of various objects, and asked questions.

Hahl slowly understood. "They seek to learn our language so they can talk to us."

"Have nothing to do with them!" S'San

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warned distrustfully. "They have evil in their minds."

"It can do no harm to teach them how we speak," Hahl defended. "Then maybe they would let us go."

He began to answer the questions of the Strange Ones, by naming for them in the language of the forest Clans the simple pictured objects and actions.

SEVERAL days of this imprisonment passed, as Hahl patiently repeated words for the two Strange Ones. By now, he had learned that the names of the man and woman were "Blaine" and "Myra." S'San still remained stubbornly silent, crouching and watching in hate.

Then came an evening on which the Strange Ones had learned the language of the Clans enough to speak it. For the man Blaine spoke to Hahl in his own tongue.

"Who are you two?" he asked the dog-man. "What has happened to Earth?"

"We are of the Clans," Hahl answered hesitantly. "But from where did *you* come? Long ago, all the Strange Ones perished from Earth."

"Strange Ones—you mean men and women?" Blaine said. Then his face paled. "You mean that all mankind is gone from Earth?"

"It happened in the days of my forefathers, many summers ago," Hahl answered. "Then, so the tale runs, the world was different. There were hosts of Strange Ones who dwelt in mighty lairs, who wielded the powers of thunder and lightning, and who ruled the world.

"*Our* forefathers, the forefathers of our Clans, were not then like us. They ran upon four feet, nor could they speak or do the other things we can do. The Strange Ones killed them, and enslaved them, and even massacred them for sport.

"But finally came the day when the world burned. The tale says that the Strange Ones loosed their lightning powers upon each other! Awful thunder-fires raged across the world! All the Strange Ones and their mighty lairs perished when the world burned thus. Our own forefathers' four-footed races mostly perished also, but a few here and there in deep forests and mountains survived.

"But the thunder-fires had somehow changed these survivors. For when they later gave birth to young, the young were new and different races. They were like us, no longer four-footed, no longer dim of mind, but able to stand erect and to learn speech and skills. And we of the forest Clans have remained thus in the generations since then."

"Good God!" whispered Blaine. "An atomic war—it finally came, and wiped out mankind and its cities!"

His face was dead white as he looked at the girl. "Myra, we two are the last humans left alive."

She pressed his hand. "At least our race is not dead yet! You and I—the race will start from us again!"

S'San, crouched behind Hahl, raised his head and his flaring green eyes blazed at them.

The girl Myra looked incredulously at Hahl and S'San. "But how could that awful disaster change four-footed animals to manlike, intelligent races?"

"We do not know," answered Hahl. "It was something in the terrible magic of the thunder-fires."

"Sudden mutation," muttered Blaine. "Atomic explosions on that scale of that holocaust, drenching all surviving animal life with hard radiation, so altered the gene-patterns as to cause a sudden evolutionary spurt."

Hahl was looking wonderingly at the man and girl. "But from where did *you* come? We believed all the Strange Ones dead."

Blaine pointed heavily upward. "We came from another world, a world far up in the sky called Venus. Generations ago, some of our human race went there to start a colony.

"But after a little time, no more ships came from Earth. Without supplies, the colony withered. Storms and other disasters had damaged the colony's own few ships beyond use, and vainly it waited for word from Earth that never came.

"Finally, Myra and I were the last born of the dwindling colonists. We grew up, knowing ourselves doomed unless we could repair one of the old ships enough to get back to Earth. And we finally succeeded,

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and came back. We came back to find—*this!*"

His voice shook and his hand trembled as he gestured toward the distant masses of blackened stone looming in the sunset outside.

"This, then, is why Earth never sent more ships to its dying colony! Earth's humans had perished, self-slain in atomic war!"

Hahl had only dimly followed what the man Blaine told. But somehow, the emotion of the man and girl troubled Hahl.

Myra was looking at Blaine, her face white but brave.

"It can all start again, from us," she said. "It must, since we are the last."

Hahl asked them, "Are you going to kill S'San and myself?"

"Kill you?" Blaine seemed startled. "No! When we first glimpsed you and stunned you with a force-beam, we thought you prowling wild beasts about to attack. But when we looked at you and saw you must be intelligent creatures, we wanted only to detain and question you."

HE REACHED in his pocket and brought forth a key. "You two are free to go now."

Hahl's heart bounded as the heavy wire door opened. He stepped out, following the man and girl down the narrow corridor to the door opening out into the sunset.

S'San, eyes flaring green fire, whispered swiftly to Hahl as he stalked along the corridor with him.

"Now is our chance, Hahl! We can slay them before he can draw the weapon! Spring with me when they reach the door!"

Hahl felt a wild revulsion. "But we can't do that! We can't slay *them!*"

"They are Strange Ones!" hissed S'San. "They will start once more the evil race that will again bring terror to the world! We can save the Clans from that by slaying. Spring—*now!*"

And with the hissed word, the cat-man launched himself in a lightning leap at the man who had just emerged behind the girl into the open air.

Instincts undreamed of until this moment exploded in Hahl's brain. He did not know why, but he could not let the Strange Ones be killed. Somehow, they were *his* Strange Ones!

Hahl uttered a yelping cry as he hurled himself only a split-second after the cat-man. Blaine whirled, startled, as Hahl's hairy body hit S'San and sent him rolling over and over outside.

"Myra, get back!" yelled Blaine. "The creatures are—"

He had whipped out his metal weapon but he stood without using it, astounded.

Hahl stood in front of the man and girl, all his rough hair bristling, as he glared at the raging cat-man who had regained his feet with inconceivable swiftness a few yards away.

"Clan-truce is broken if you seek to slay these Strange Ones!" cried Hahl. "You will have to slay me first!"

"You are traitor to the Clans!" hissed S'San. "But the Clans themselves shall swiftly bring death to these evil ones!"

And with a lightning bound, the cat-man was gone into the thickets, racing away northward amid the black Crying Stones.

The man and girl were looking at Hahl in wonder.

"Hahl, you saved us from your comrade. Why did you?" Blaine asked.

Hahl squirmed uncomfortably. "I do not know. I could not let him harm you."

Blaine's face strangely softened, and he put his hand on the dog-man's hairy shoulder.

"Hahl, only one race among the creatures in the old age was man's loyal friend," he said huskily. "The race from which you are descended."

Hahl's heart swelled at the touch of the hand on his shoulder, and he felt a queer, new happiness.

From far out in the darkening twilight came the echoes of a screaming call.

"Send the Clan-call through all the forests!" echoed S'San's distant cry. "Strange Ones have returned! Gather the Clans!"

Hahl whirled to the man and girl. "The Clans will gather here quickly! They will come in hosts, and you must escape or they will kill you lest you burn up the world as the other Strange Ones did long ago."

Blaine shook his head helplessly. "We cannot escape. The power of our ship is

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exhausted. And there is not enough power left in my weapon to stand off a horde."

The girl looked at him, white face strained in the gathering darkness. "Then this is the end of us? Of our race?"

FROM far out in the night, S'San's Clan-call was faintly repeated, carried across the dark forests north and south and west.

Hahl's mind was in a fever of torment as helplessly they waited. The man and girl who now stood close together, speaking in low whispers—they were *his,* and he must somehow save them. But how?

The moon rose, a full orb casting a silver effulgence on the somber dead city. And as the night wind wailed mournfully louder through the Crying Stones, Hahl's keen ears caught other sounds, his eyes glimpsed dark shapes surging southward through the ruins.

"They are coming! All the Clans of the forest come to kill you!" he warned agonizedly.

Blaine stood in the moonlight, the girl in the circle of his arm, looking heavily northward.

"You can do nothing more for us, Hahl. Get away from here, and save yourself."

Hahl sensed the gathering of the Clans around the clearing. He knew that only this dire emergency would have brought them into the shunned and accursed place of Crying Stones.

The Clawed Clan of S'San was there, cat-eyes gleaming greenly in the dark. His own Hairy Clan, hosts of dog-men, were staring at him in amazement. The Furred Clan's bear-like horde, the Fox-Folk peering sharply—all the forest folk had come.

Last, came the Hoofed Clan, ponderous, towering, manlike, but their hoofed feet and stiff, horny hands and massive maned heads betraying the equine ancestors of whom they were an evolution.

S'San's hissing voice ripped the tense silence as the cat-man bounded out into the moonlit clearing.

"Did I lie, Clan-brothers? Are they not two Strange Ones such as worked evil long ago?"

The deep, rumbling voice of Trondor, leader of the Hoofed Clan, answered from the darkness.

"You have told truth, S'San. These are indeed two of that terrible race whom we thought dead."

"Then slay them!" raged a feline voice in the shadows. "Kill, before they again burn up the world!"

There was a surging movement of the shadowy hordes out into the moonlight where Blaine stood with Myra clinging to his side.

Hahl uttered a furious howling cry, and flung himself protectively in front of the man and girl. Eyes flaring red, sharp teeth bared, Hahl cried to the advancing horde.

"Forest-folk, is this the justice of the Clans? To condemn these two without even a hearing?"

"They are Strange Ones!" hissed S'San. "They darkened the world for ages and finally almost destroyed it. Let them die!"

"Kill them thus without hearing, and you will need to kill me first!" raged Hahl.

From his own folk, from the masses of the Hairy Clan, there came a low whine of sympathy.

"Perhaps we do not need to kill these Strange Ones when there are only two?" muttered one of the dog-men.

Big Trondor spoke in his deep voice. "You say that because you of the Hairy Clan are still haunted by an old loyalty to the Strange Ones."

The Hoofed One slowly added, "But Hahl is right, when he says that we Clans condemn none without a hearing. Let the Strange One defend himself and his race from death-sentence, if he can!"

Blaine had been listening, and had understood. Now he put the girl behind him and stepped forth in front of Hahl.

IN THE moonlight, the white-faced man faced the crouched masses of the hordes with his head erect and voice steady.

"Clans of the forest, since in us our race is ending, I will speak for all of my race who went before us.

"We men came of the forest-folk long ago, even as you, though our pride grew so great that we forgot that fact. Yes, long and long ago we sprang from soft-skinned, weak, fumbling creatures of the forest

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world, creatures that had no claws or strength or swiftness.

"But one thing those creatures had, and that was curiosity. And curiosity was the key that unlocked for them the hidden powers of nature, so that they grew strong. So strong we grew, so great we deemed ourselves, that we thought ourselves a different order of beings and oppressed and tyrannized the other creatures of Earth.

"Yet for all the powers our curiosity had gathered for us, we remained in mind and heart close kin to the simple forest-creatures from which we came. Is it wonderful then that we could not handle those powers wisely? Is it wonderful that when we finally thefted the fires of the sun itself, we misused them and wrecked the world?

"Yet, forest-races, are you so sure that any of *your* Clans would have handled such powers more wisely?"

Blaine paused for a moment before his heavy voice concluded.

"But I know that that is scant excuse for the evil we did. It is yours to judge. If your judgment be against us, let the stars look down tonight on the ending of our race. Let finis be written to the terrible and wonderful story of the apes who dared lay hands on the sun, and who greatly rose and fell. And let your new forest races learn from our failure and try to do better than we."

There was a long, hushed silence among the moonlit hosts of the Clans, as Blaine's voice ceased.

Then Hahl heard the deep voice of Trondor rumble from the shadows.

"Clan-brothers all, you have heard the Strange One. Now what is your judgment on him and on his race?"

No voice answered for a moment. And then a dark figure among the bearlike Furred Clan spoke.

"Judge you for us, Trondor. You are the wisest of the Clans."

The man and girl, and Hahl who still stood defiantly in front of them in the moonlight, waited tensely.

TRONDOR'S rumbling voice came slowly. "What the Strange One has said is true, that his race were but forest-folk like ourselves long ago. We had forgotten that, as they forgot it. It may be that with their powers, we would have been no wiser.

"The world has changed now. And it seems that the Strange Ones have changed too, and have learned. If they have, there is room in the world for them and our own new races to live in friendship."

Blaine spoke huskily. "I can promise, for ourselves. The world has changed, as you say. What powers are devised in future must be handled for the good of all our races. I think the world will not burn again."

Trondor flung up his massive maned head, and his voice rang loud.

"Then it is my judgment that we give Clan-brotherhood to the Strange Ones! That an old and blind world be forgotten in new friendship and peace!"

Swiftly, from the eager hosts of the Hairy Clan, came the yelped greetings of Hahl's brothers.

"Clan of the Strange Ones, greeting and peace!"

Clan-greeting from the Furred Ones, from the Fox-Folk, from the Hoofed Ones, echoed deafeningly through the moonlight.

Last of all, a little sulkily but with the blaze of hatred gone from his green eyes, S'San spoke.

"Greeting and peace from the Clawed Clan, Strange Ones!"

"The moon sinks, now let the Clans depart," Trondor rumbled. "But we will return, Strange Ones. This place is no longer cursed."

Blaine and Myra watched as the hosts departed. But when all had gone, Hahl still remained.

"I would like to stay with you," he said slowly. And he added hopefully, "I would be your servant."

Blaine gripped his hairy arm. "No, Hahl —master and servant no longer, but friend and friend now. In this new world where all now are friends, our tie is oldest and deepest."

From far out in the darkness echoed the last Clan-call of the separating hosts. And the wailing of the Crying Stones seemed to die into peace, as the wind sank and dawn glimmered slowly across the world.

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Enoch

BY

ROBERT BLOCH

My business? Killing people . . . so step right up!

Heading by
A. R. TILBURNE

IT ALWAYS starts the same way.

First, there's the *feeling.*

Have you ever felt the tread of little feet walking across the top of your skull? Footsteps on your skull, back and forth, back and forth?

It starts like that.

You can't see who does the walking. After all, it's on top of your head. If you're clever, you wait for a chance and suddenly brush a hand through your hair. But you can't catch the walker that way. He *knows.* Even if you clamp both hands flat to your head, he manages to wriggle through, somehow. Or maybe he jumps.

Terribly swift, he is. And you can't ignore him. If you don't pay any attention to the footsteps, he tries the next step. He wriggles down the back of your neck and whispers in your ear.

You can feel his body, so tiny and cold, pressed tightly against the base of your brain. There must be something numbing in his claws, because they don't hurt—although later, you'll find little scratches on your neck that bleed and bleed. But at the time, all you know is that something tiny and cold is pressing there. Pressing, and whispering.

That's when you try to fight him. You try not to hear what he says. Because when you listen, you're lost. You have to obey him, then.

Oh, he's wicked and wise!

He knows how to frighten and threaten, if you dare to resist.

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But I seldom try, any more. It's better for me if I do listen and then obey.

As long as I'm willing to listen, things don't seem so bad. Because he can be soothing and persuasive, too. Tempting. The things he has promised me, in that little silken whisper!

He keeps his promises, too.

Folks think I'm poor because I never have any money and live in that old shack on the edge of the swamp. But he has given me riches.

After I do what he wants, he takes me away—out of myself—for days. There are other places besides this world, you know; places where I am king.

People laugh at me and say I have no friends; the girls in town used to call me "scarecrow." Yet sometimes—after I've done his bidding—he brings the riches of the world to me.

Just dreams? I don't think so. It's the other life that's just a dream; the life in the shack at the edge of the swamp. That part doesn't seem real any more.

Not even the killing. . . .

Yes, I kill people.

That's what Enoch wants, you know.

That's what he whispers about. He asks me to kill people, for him.

I don't like that. I used to fight against it —I told you that before, didn't I?—but I can't any more.

He wants me to kill people for him. Enoch. The thing that lives on the top of my head.

I can't see him. I can't catch him. I can only feel him, and hear him, and obey him.

Sometimes he leaves me alone for days. Then, suddenly, I'll feel him there, scratching away at the roof of my brain. I'll hear his whisper ever so plainly, and he'll be telling me about someone who is coming through the swamp.

I don't know how he knows about them. He couldn't have seen them, yet he describes them perfectly.

"There's a tramp walking down the Aylesworthy Road. A short, fat man, with a bald head. That makes it easier."

Then he'll laugh for a minute, and go on.

"His name is Mike. He's wearing a brown sweater and blue overalls. He's going to turn into the swamp in about ten minutes when the sun goes down. He'll stop under the big tree next to the dump.

"Better hide behind that tree. Wait until he starts to look for firewood. Then you know what to do. Get the hatchet, now. Hurry."

SOMETIMES I ask Enoch what he will give me. Usually, I just trust him. I know I'm going to have to do it, anyway. So I might as well go ahead at once. Enoch is never wrong about things, and he keeps me out of trouble.

That is, he always did—until the last time.

One night, I was sitting in the shack eating supper when he told me about this girl.

"She's coming to visit you," he whispered. "A beautiful girl, all in black. She has a wonderful quality to her head—fine bones. Fine."

At first I thought he was telling me about one of my *rewards*. But Enoch was talking about a real person.

"She will come to the door and ask you to help her. To fix her car. She has taken the side road, planning to go into town by a shorter route. Now the car is well into the swamp, and one of the tires needs changing."

It sounded funny, hearing Enoch talk about things like automobile tires. But he knows about them. Enoch knows *everything*.

"You will go out to help her when she asks you. Don't take anything. She has a wrench in the car. Use that."

This time I tried to fight him. I kept whimpering, "I won't do it, I won't do it."

He just laughed. And then he told me what he'd do if I refused. He told me over and over again.

"Better that I do it to her and not to you," Enoch reminded me. "Or would you rather I—"

"No!" I said. "No. I'll do it."

"After all," Enoch whispered, "I can't help it. I must be served ever so often. To keep me alive. To keep me strong. So I can serve you. So I can give you things. That is why you have to obey me. If not, I'll just stay right here and—"

"No," I said. "I'll do it."

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And I did it.

She knocked on my door just a few minutes later, and it was just as Enoch had whispered it. She was a pretty girl—with blonde hair. I like blonde hair. I was glad, when I went out into the swamp with her, that I didn't have to harm her hair. I hit her behind the neck with the wrench.

Enoch told me what to do, step by step.

After I used the hatchet, I put the body in the quicksand. Enoch was with me, and he cautioned me about heel-marks. I got rid of them.

I was worried about the car, but he showed me how to use the end of a rotten log and pitch it over. I wasn't sure it would sink, too, but it did. And much faster than I would have believed.

It was a relief to see the car go. I threw the wrench in after it. Then Enoch told me to go home, and I did, and at once I felt the dreamy feeling stealing over me.

ENOCH had promised me something extra special for this one, and I sank down into sleep right away. I could barely feel the pressure leave my head as Enoch left me, scampering off back into the swamp for *his* reward. . . .

I don't know how long I slept. It must have been a long time. All I remember is that I finally started to wake up, knowing somehow that Enoch was back with me again, and feeling that something was wrong.

Then I woke up all the way, because I heard the banging on my door.

I waited a moment. I waited for Enoch to whisper to me, tell me what I should do.

But Enoch was asleep now. He always sleeps—afterwards. Nothing wakes him for days on end; and during that time I am free. Usually I enjoy such freedom, but not now. I needed his help.

The pounding on my door grew louder, and I couldn't wait any longer.

I got up and answered.

Old Sheriff Shelby came through the doorway.

"Come on, Seth," he said. "I'm taking you up to the jail."

I didn't say anything. His beady little black eyes were peeping everywhere inside my shack. When he looked at me, I wanted to hide, I felt so scared.

He couldn't see Enoch, of course. Nobody can. But Enoch was there; I felt him resting very lightly on top of my skull, burrowed down under a blanket of hair, clinging to my curls and sleeping as peaceful as a baby.

"Emily Robbins' folks said she was planning on cutting through the swamp," the Sheriff told me. "We followed the tire tracks up to the old quicksand."

Enoch had forgotten about the tracks. So what could I say? Besides.

"Anything you say can be used agin you," said Sheriff Shelby. "Come on, Seth."

I went with him. There was nothing else for me to do. I went with him into town, and all the loafers were out trying to rush the car. There were women in the crowd too. They kept yelling for the men to "get" me.

But Sheriff Shelby held them off, and at last I was tucked away safe and sound in back of the jailhouse. He locked me up in the middle cell. The two cells on each side of mine were vacant, so I was all alone. All alone except for Enoch, and he slept through everything.

It was still pretty early in the morning, and Sheriff Shelby went out again with some other men. I guess he was going to try and get the body out of the quicksand, if he could. He didn't try to ask any questions, and I wondered about that.

Charley Potter, now, he was different. He wanted to know *everything*. Sheriff Shelby had left him in charge of the jail while he was away. He brought me my breakfast after a while, and hung around asking questions.

I just kept still. I knew better than to talk to a fool like Charley Potter. He thought I was crazy. Just like the mob outside. Most people in that town thought I was crazy—because of my mother, I suppose, and because of the way I lived all alone out in the swamp.

What could I say to Charley Potter? If I told him about Enoch he'd never believe me anyway.

So I didn't talk.

I listened.

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Then Charley Potter told *me* about the search for Emily Robbins, and about how Sheriff Shelby got to wondering over some other disappearances a while back. He said that there would be a big trial, and the District Attorney was coming down from the County Seat. And he'd heard they were sending out a doctor to see me right away.

SURE enough, just as I finished breakfast, the doctor came. Charley Potter saw him drive up and let him in. He had to work fast to keep some of the oafs from breaking in with him. They wanted to lynch me, I suppose. But the doctor came in all right—a little man with one of those funny beards on his chin—and he made Charley Potter go up front into the office while he sat down outside the cell and talked to me.

His name was Dr. Silversmith.

Now up to this time, I wasn't really *feeling* anything. It had all happened so fast I didn't get a chance to think.

It was like part of a dream; the sheriff and the mob and all this talk about a trial and a lynching and the body in the swamp.

But somehow the sight of this Dr. Silversmith changed things.

He was real, all right. You could tell he was a doctor by the quiet way he talked; he sounded like a the doctor who wanted to send me to the institution after they found my mother.

That was one of the first things Dr. Silversmith asked me—what had happened to my mother?

He seemed to know quite a lot about me, and that made it easier for me to talk.

Pretty soon I found myself telling him all sorts of things. How my mother and I lived in the shack. How she made the philtres and sold them. About the big pot and the way we gathered herbs at night. About the nights when she went off alone and I would hear the queer noises from far away.

I didn't want to say much more, but he knew, anyway. He knew they had called her a witch. He even knew the way she died—when Santo Dinorelli came to our door that evening and stabbed her because she had made the potion for his daughter who ran away with that trapper. He knew about me living in the swamp alone after that, too.

But he didn't know about Enoch.

Enoch, up on top of my head all the time, still sleeping, not knowing or caring what was happening to me. . . .

Somehow, I was talking to Dr. Silversmith about Enoch. I wanted to explain that it wasn't really I who had killed this girl. So I had to mention Enoch, and how my mother had made the bargain in the woods. She hadn't let me come with her—I was only twelve—but she took some of my blood, pricking me with a needle and dropping it into a little bottle.

I don't know exactly what she did, but when she came back in the morning, Enoch was with her. I couldn't see him, of course, but she told me about him—and I could feel him when he perched on my head.

He was to be mine forever, she said, and look after me and help me in all ways.

I told this very carefully and explained why it was I had to obey Enoch, ever since my mother was killed. Enoch protected me, just as my mother had planned, because she knew I couldn't get along alone. I admitted this to Dr. Silversmith because I thought he was a wise man and would understand.

That was wrong.

I knew it at once. Because while Dr. Silversmith leaned forward and stroked his little beard and said, "Yes, yes," over and over again, I could feel his eyes watching me.

He had the same kind of eyes as Sheriff Shelby. Beady eyes. Mean eyes. Eyes that don't trust you when they see you. Prying, peeping eyes.

THEN he began to ask me all sorts of funny questions. You'd think he'd ask me about Enoch, since *he* was the explanation of everything. But instead, Dr. Silversmith asked me if I ever heard any *other* voices. If I ever saw things that I knew weren't there.

He asked me how I felt when I killed Emily Robbins and whether I—but I won't repeat that question! Why, he talked to me as if I was some kind of—crazy person!

I just laughed at him, then, and shut up tighter than a clam.

After a while he gave up and went away, shaking his head. I laughed after him because I knew he hadn't found out what he

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wanted to find out. He wanted to know all my mother's secrets, and my secrets, and Enoch's secrets too.

But he didn't, and I laughed. And then I went to sleep. I slept almost all afternoon.

When I woke up, there was a new man standing in front of my cell. He had a big, fat smiling face, and nice eyes.

"Hello, Seth," he said, very friendly. "Having a little snooze?"

I reached up to the top of my head. I couldn't feel Enoch, but I knew he was there, and still asleep. He moves fast, even when he's sleeping.

"Don't be alarmed," said the man. "I won't hurt you."

"Did that doctor send you?" I asked.

The man laughed. "Of course not," he told me. "My name's Cassidy. Edwin Cassidy. I'm the District Attorney, and I'm in charge here. Can I come in and sit down, do you suppose?"

"I'm locked in," I said.

"I've got the keys from the sheriff," said Mr. Cassidy. He took them out and opened my cell; walked right in and sat down next to me on the bench.

"Aren't you afraid?" I asked him. "You know, I'm supposed to be a murderer."

"Why Seth," Mr. Cassidy laughed, "I'm not afraid of you. I know you didn't mean to kill anybody."

He put his hand on my shoulder, and I didn't draw away. It was a nice, fat, soft hand. He had a big diamond ring on his finger that just twinkled away in the sunshine.

"How's Enoch?" he said.

I jumped.

"Oh, that's all right. That fool doctor told me when I met him down the street. He doesn't understand about Enoch, does he, Seth? But you and I do."

"That doctor thinks I'm crazy," I whispered.

"Well, just between us, Seth, it did sound a little hard to believe, at first. But I've just come from the swamp. Sheriff Shelby and some of his men are still working down there. Digging, you know.

"They found Emily Robbins' body just a little while ago. And other bodies, too. A fat man's body, and a small boy, and some Indian. The quicksand preserves them, you know."

I WATCHED his eyes, and they were still smiling, so I knew I could trust this man.

"They'll find other bodies too, if they keep on, won't they, Seth?"

I nodded.

"But I didn't wait any longer. I saw enough to understand that you were telling the truth. Enoch must have made you do these things, didn't he?"

I nodded again.

"Fine," said Mr. Cassidy, pressing my shoulder. "You see, we do understand each other now. So I won't blame you for anything you tell me."

"What do you want to know?" I asked.

"Oh, lots of things. I'm interested in Enoch, you see. Just how many people did he ask you to kill—all together, that is?"

"Nine," I said.

"And they're all buried in the quicksand?"

"Yes."

"Do you know their names?"

"Only a few." I told him the names of the ones I knew. "Sometimes Enoch just describes them for me and I go out to meet them," I explained.

Mr. Cassidy sort of chuckled and took out a cigar. I frowned.

"Don't want me to smoke, eh?"

"Please—I don't like it. My mother didn't believe in smoking; she never let me."

Mr. Cassidy laughed out loud now, but he put the cigar away and leaned forward.

"You can be a big help to me, Seth," he whispered. "I suppose you know what a District Attorney must do."

"He's a sort of a lawyer, isn't he—at trials and things?"

"That's right. I'm going to be at your trial, Seth. Now you don't want to have to get up in front of all those people and tell them about—what happened. Right?"

"No, I don't, Mr. Cassidy. Not those mean people here in town. They hate me."

"Then here's what you do. You tell me all about it, and I'll talk for you. That's friendly enough, isn't it?"

I wished Enoch was there to help me, but

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he was asleep. I looked at Mr. Cassidy and made up my own mind.

"Yes," I said. "I can tell you."

So I told him everything I knew.

After a while he stopped chuckling, but he was just getting so interested he couldn't bother to laugh or do anything but listen.

"One thing more," he said. "We found some bodies in the swamp. Emily Robbins' body we could identify, and several of the others. But it would be easier if we knew something else. You can tell me this, Seth. Where are the heads?"

I stood up and turned away. "I won't tell you that," I said, "because I don't know."

"Don't know?"

"I give them to Enoch," I explained. "Don't you understand—that's why I must kill people for him. Because he wants their heads."

Mr. Cassidy looked puzzled.

"He always makes me cut the heads off and leave them," I went on. "I put the bodies in the quicksand, and then go home. He puts me to sleep and rewards me. After that he goes away—back to the heads. That's what he wants."

"Why does he want them, Seth?"

I told him. "You see, it wouldn't do you any good if you could find them. Because you probably wouldn't recognize anything anyway."

Mr. Cassidy sat up and sighed. "But why do you let Enoch do such things?"

"I must. Or else he'd do it to me. That's what he always threatens. He has to have it. So I obey him."

MR. CASSIDY watched me while I walked the floor, but he didn't say a word. He seemed to be very nervous, all of a sudden, and when I came close, he sort of leaned away.

"You'll explain all that at the trial, of course," I said. "About Enoch, and everything."

He shook his head.

"I'm not going to tell about Enoch at the trial, and neither are you," Mr. Cassidy said. "Nobody is even going to know that Enoch exists."

"Why?"

"I'm trying to help you, Seth. Don't you know what the people will say if you mention Enoch to them? They'll say you're crazy! And you don't want that to happen."

"No. But what can you do? How can you help me?"

Mr. Cassidy smiled at me.

"You're afraid of Enoch, aren't you? Well, I was just thinking out loud. Suppose you gave Enoch to me?"

I gulped.

"Yes. Suppose you gave Enoch to me, right now? Let me take care of him for you during the trial. Then he wouldn't be yours, and you wouldn't have to say anything about him. He probably doesn't want people to know what he does, anyway."

"That's right," I said. "Enoch would be very angry. He's a secret, you know. But I hate to give him to you without asking—and he's asleep now."

"Asleep?"

"Yes. On top of my skull. Only you can't see him, of course."

Mr. Cassidy gazed at my head and then he chuckled again.

"Oh, I can explain everything when he wakes up," he told me. "When he knows it's all for the best, I'm sure he'll be happy."

"Well—I guess it's all right, then," I sighed. "But you must promise to take good care of him."

"Sure," said Mr. Cassidy.

"And you'll give him what he wants? What he needs?"

"Of course."

"And you won't tell a soul?"

"Not a soul."

"Of course you know what will happen to you if you refuse to give Enoch what he wants," I warned Mr. Cassidy. "He will take it—from you—by force."

"Don't you worry, Seth."

I stood still for a minute. Because all at once I could feel something move. Enoch was waking up!

"He's awake," I whispered. "Now I can tell him."

Yes, Enoch was awake. I could feel him crawling over my scalp, moving towards my ear.

"Enoch," I whispered. "Can you hear me?"

He heard.

Then I explained everything to him. How was I giving him to Mr. Cassidy.

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Enoch didn't say a word.

Mr. Cassidy didn't say a word. He just sat there and grinned. I suppose it must have looked a little strange to see me talking to—nothing.

"Go to Mr. Cassidy," I whispered. "Go to him, now."

And Enoch went.

I felt the weight lift from my head. That was all, but I knew he was gone.

"Can you feel him, Mr. Cassidy?" I asked.

"What—oh, sure!" he said, and stood up.

"Take good care of Enoch," I told him. "The best."

"Don't put your hat on," I warned. "Enoch doesn't like hats."

"Sorry, I forgot. Well, Seth, I'll say goodbye now. You've been a mighty great help to me—and from now on we can just forget about Enoch, as far as telling anybody else is concerned.

"I'll come back again and talk about the trail. That Dr. Silversmith, he's going to try and tell the folks you're crazy. Maybe it would be best if you just denied everything you told him—now that I have Enoch."

That sounded like a fine idea, but then I knew Mr. Cassidy was a smart man.

"Whatever you say, Mr. Cassidy. Just be good to Enoch, and he'll be good to you."

Mr. Cassidy shook my hand and then he and Enoch went away. I felt tired again. Maybe it was the strain, and maybe it was just that I felt a little queer, knowing that Enoch was gone. Anyway, I went back to sleep for a long time.

It was night time when I woke up. Old Charley Potter was banging on the cell door, bringing me my supper.

He jumped when I said hello to him, and backed away.

"Murderer!" he yelled. "They got nine bodies out'n the swamp. You crazy fiend!"

"Why, Charley," I said. "I always thought you were a friend of mine."

"Loony! I'm gonna get out of here right now—leave you locked up for the night. Sheriff'll see that nobuddy breaks in to lynch you—if you ask me, he's wasting his time."

Then Charley turned out all the lights and went away. I heard him go out the front door and put the padlock on, and I was all alone in the jailhouse.

All alone! It was strange to be all alone for the first time in years—all alone, without Enoch.

I ran my fingers across the top of my head. It felt bare and queer.

THE moon was shining through the window and I stood there looking out at the empty street. Enoch always loved the moon. It made him lively. Made him restless and greedy. I wondered how he felt now, with Mr. Cassidy.

I must have stood there for a long time. My legs were numb when I turned around and listened to the fumbling at the door.

The lock clicked open, and then Mr. Cassidy came running in. He was all out of breath, and he was clawing at his head.

"Take him off me!" he yelled. "Take him away!"

"What's the matter?" I asked.

"Enoch—that thing of yours—I thought you were crazy—maybe I'm the crazy one—but take him off!"

"Why, Mr. Cassidy! I told you what Enoch was like."

"He's crawling around up there now. I can feel him. And I can *hear* him. The things he whispers!"

"But I explained all that, Mr. Cassidy. Enoch wants something, doesn't he? You know what it is. And you'll have to give it to him. You promised."

"I can't. I won't kill for him—he can't make me—"

"He can. And he will."

Mr. Cassidy gripped the bars on the cell door. "Seth, you must help me. Call Enoch. Take him back. Make him go back to you. Hurry."

"All right, Mr. Cassidy," I said.

I called Enoch. He didn't answer. I called again. Silence.

"It's no use," I sighed. "He won't come back. He likes you."

Mr. Cassidy started to cry. It shocked me, and then I felt kind of sorry for him. He just didn't understand, after all. I know what Enoch can do to you when he whispers that way. First he coaxes you, and then he pleads, and then he threatens—

"You'd better obey him," I told Mr. Cassidy. "Has he told you who to kill?"

Mr. Cassidy didn't pay any attention to

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me. He just cried. And then he took out the jail keys and opened up the cell next to mine. He went in and locked the door.

"I won't," he sobbed. "I won't, I won't!"

"You won't what?" I asked.

"I won't kill Dr. Silversmith at the hotel and give Enoch his head. I'll stay here, in the cell, where I'm safe! Oh, you fiend, you devil—"

He slumped down sideways and I could see him through the bars dividing our cells, sitting all hunched over while his hands tore at his hair.

"You'd better," I called out. "Or else Enoch will do something. Please, Mr Cassidy—oh, hurry—"

Then Mr. Cassidy gave a little moan and I guess he fainted, because he didn't say anything more and he stopped clawing. I called to him once but he wouldn't answer.

So what could I do? I sat down in the dark corner of my cell and watched the moonlight. Moonlight always makes Enoch wild.

Then Mr. Cassidy started to scream. Not loud, but deep down in his throat. He didn't move at all, just screamed.

I knew it was Enoch, taking what he wanted—from him.

What was the use of looking? You can't stop him, and I had warned Mr. Cassidy.

I JUST sat there and held my hands to my ears until it was all over.

When I turned around again, Mr. Cassidy still sat slumped up against the bars. There wasn't a sound to be heard.

Oh, yes, there was! A purring. A soft, faraway purring. The purring of Enoch, after he has eaten. Then I heard a scratching. The scratching of Enoch's claws, when he frisks because he's been fed.

The purring and the scratching came from inside Mr. Cassidy's head.

That would be Enoch, all right, and he was happy now.

I was happy, too.

I reached my hand through the bars and pulled the jail keys from Mr. Cassidy's pocket. I opened my cell door and I was free again.

There was no need for me to stay now, with Mr. Cassidy gone. And Enoch wouldn't be staying, either. I called to him.

"Here, Enoch!"

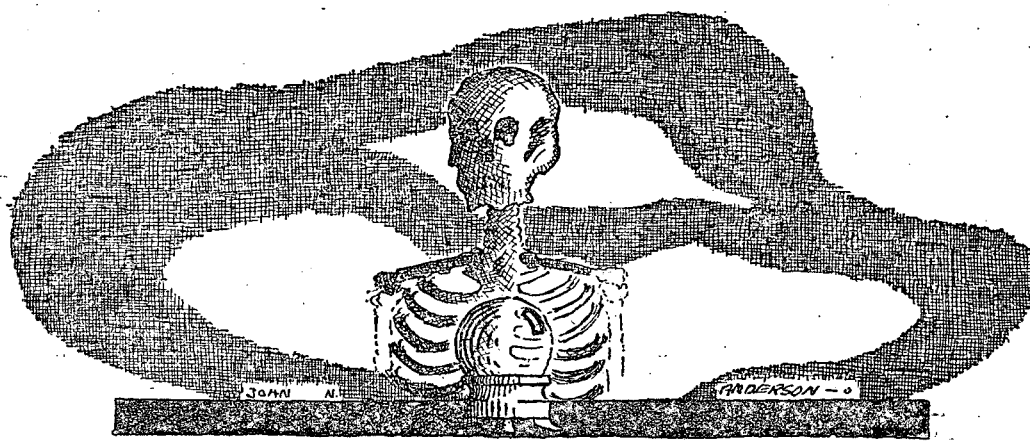
That was as close I've ever come to really *seeing* Enoch—a sort of a white streak that came flashing out of the big red hole he had eaten in the back of Mr. Cassidy's skull.

Then I felt the soft, cold, flabby weight landing on my own head once more, and I knew Enoch had come home.

I walked through the corridor and opened the outer door of the jail.

Enoch's tiny feet began to patter on the roof of my brain.

Together we walked out into the night. The moon was shining, everything was still, and I could hear, ever so softly, Enoch's happy chuckling in my ear.



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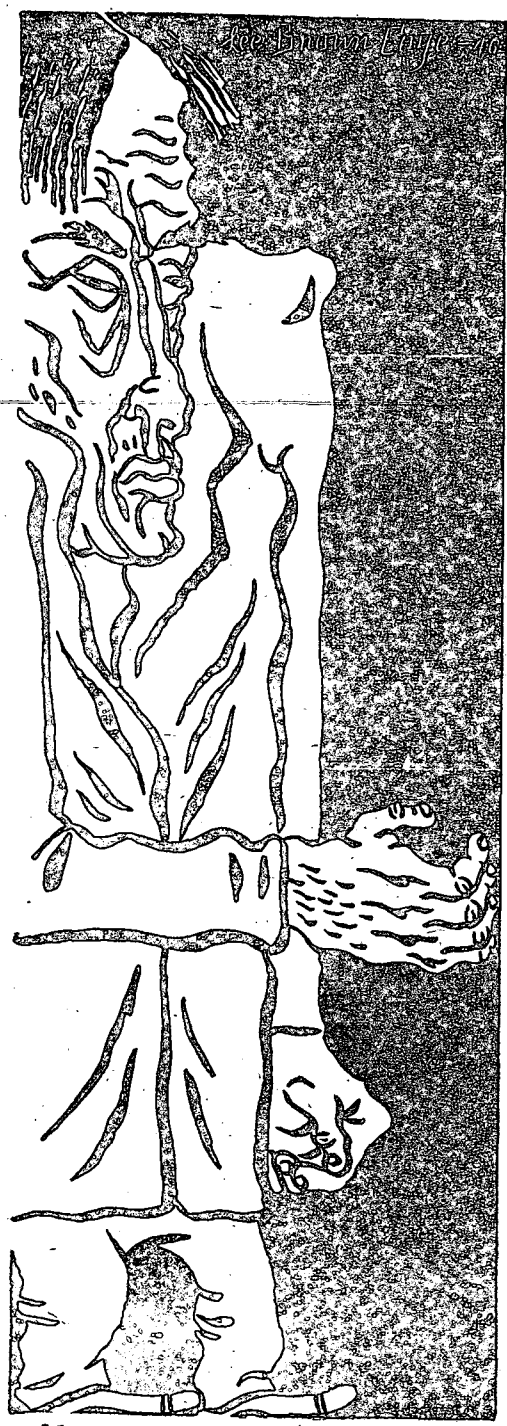
Alice and the Allergy

BY FRITZ LEIBER



THERE was a knocking. The doctor put down his pen. Then he heard his wife hurrying down the stairs. He resumed his history of old Mrs. Easton's latest blood-clot.

The knocking was repeated. He reminded himself to get after Engstrand to fix the bell.

After a pause long enough for him to write a sentence and a half, there came a third and louder burst of knocking. He frowned and got up.

It was dark in the hall. Alice was standing on the third step from the bottom, making no move to answer the door. As he went past her he shot her an inquiring glance. He noted that her eyelids looked slightly puffy, as if she were having another attack—an impression which the hoarseness of her voice a moment later confirmed.

"*He* knocked that way," was what she whispered. She sounded frightened. He looked back at her with an expression of greater puzzlement—which almost immediately, however, changed to comprehension. He gave her a sympathetic, semi-professional nod, as if to say, "I understand now. Glad you mentioned it. We'll talk about it later." Then he opened the door.

It was Renshaw from the Allergy Lab. "Got the new kit for you, Howard," he remarked in an amiable Southern drawl. "Finished making it up this afternoon and thought I'd bring it around myself."

"A million thanks. Come on in."

Alice had retreated a few steps farther up the stairs. Renshaw did not appear to notice her in the gloom. He was talkative as he followed Howard into his office.

Heading by LEE BROWN COYE

You avoid things you're allergic to—but suppose you can't!

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"An interestin' case turned up. Very unusual. A doctor we supply lost a patient by broncho-spasm. Nurse mistakenly injected the shot into a vein. In ten seconds he was strangling. Edema of the glottis developed. Injected aminophylline and epinephrine—no dice. Tried to get a bronchoscope down his windpipe to give him air, but couldn't manage. Finally did a tracheotomy, but by that time it was too late."

"You always have to be damned careful," Howard remarked.

"Right," Renshaw agreed cheerfully. He set the kit on the desk and stepped back. "Well, if we don't identify the substance responsible for your wife's allergy this time, it won't be for lack of imagination. I added some notions of my own to your suggestions."

"Good."

"You know, she's well on her way to becoming the toughest case I ever made kits for. We've tested all the ordinary substances, and most of the extraordinary."

Howard nodded, his gaze following the dark woodwork toward the hall door. "Look," he said, "do many doctors tell you about allergy patients showing fits of acute depression during attacks, a tendency to rake up unpleasant memories—especially old fears?"

Depression seems to be a pretty common symptom," said Renshaw cautiously. "Let's see, how long is it she's been bothered?"

"About two years—ever since six months after our marriage." Howard smiled. "That arouses certain obvious suspicions, but you know how exhaustively we've tested myself, my clothes, my professional equipment."

"I should say so," Renshaw assured him. For a moment the men were silent. Then, "She suffers from depression and fear?"

Howard nodded.

"Fear of anything in particular?"

But Howard did not answer that question.

ABOUT ten minutes later, as the outside door closed on the man from the Allergy Lab, Alice came slowly down the stairs.

The puffiness around her eyes was more marked, emphasizing her paleness. Her eyes were still fixed on the door.

"You know Renshaw, of course," her husband said.

"Of course, dear," she answered huskily, with a little laugh. "It was just the knocking. It made me remember *him*."

"That so?" Howard inquired cheerily. "I don't think you've ever told me that detail. I'd always assumed—"

"No," she said, "the bell to Auntie's house was out of order that afternoon. So it was his knocking that drew me through the dark hallway and made me open the door, so that I saw his white avid face and long strong hands—with the big dusty couch just behind me, where . . . and my hand on the curtain sash, with which he—"

"Don't think about it." Howard reached up and caught hold of her cold hand. "That chap's been dead for two years now. He'll strangle no more women."

"Are you sure?" she asked.

"Of course. Look, dear, Renshaw's brought a new kit. We'll make the scratch tests right away."

She followed him obediently into the examination room across the hall from the office. He rejected the forearm she offered him—it still showed faint evidences of the last test. As he swabbed off the other, he studied her face.

"Another little siege, eh? Well, we'll ease that with a mild ephedrine spray."

"Oh it's nothing," she said. "I wouldn't mind it at all if it weren't for those stupid moods that go with it."

"I know," he said, blocking out the test areas.

"I always have that idiotic feeling," she continued hesitantly, "that *he's* trying to get at me."

Ignoring her remark, he picked up the needle. They were both silent as he worked with practiced speed and care. Finally he sat back, remarking with considerably more confidence than he felt, "There! I bet you this time we've nailed the elusive little demon who likes to choke you!"—and looked up at the face of the slim, desirable, but sometimes maddeningly irrational person he had made his wife.

"I wonder if you've considered it from my point of view," he said, smiling. "I

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know it was a horrible experience, just about the worst a woman can undergo. But if it hadn't happened, I'd never have been called in to take care of you—and we'd never have got married."

"That's true," she said, putting her hand on his.

"It was completely understandable that you should have spells of fear afterwards," he continued. "Anyone would. Though I do think your background made a difference. After all, your Aunt kept you so shut away from people—men especially. Told you they were all sadistic, evil-minded brutes. You know, sometimes when I think of that woman deliberately trying to infect you with all her rotten fears, I find myself on the verge of forgetting that she was no more responsible for her actions than any other miseducated neurotic."

She smiled at him gratefully.

"At any rate," he went on, "it was perfectly natural that you should be frightened, especially when you learned that he was a murderer with a record, who had killed other women and had even, in two cases where he'd been interrupted, made daring efforts to come back and complete the job. Knowing that about him, it was plain realism on your part to be scared—at least intelligently apprehensive—as long as he was on the loose. Even after we were married.

"But then, when you got incontrovertible proof—" He fished in his pocket. "Of course, he didn't formally pay the law's penalty, but he's just as dead as if he had." He smoothed out a worn old newspaper clipping. "You can't have forgotten this," he said gently, and began to read:

MYSTERY STRANGLER
UNMASKED BY DEATH

Lansing, Dec. 22. (Universal Press)—A mysterious boarder who died two days ago at a Kinsey Street rooming house has been conclusively identified as the uncaught rapist and strangler who in recent years terrified three Midwestern cities. Police Lieutenant Jim Galeto, interviewed by reporters in the death room at 1555 Kinsey Street . . .

She covered the clipping with her hand. "Please."

"Sorry," he said, "but an idea had occurred to me—one that would explain your continuing fear. I don't think you've ever hinted at it, but are you really completely satisfied that this was the man? Or is there a part of your mind that still doubts, that believes the police mistaken, that pictures the killer still at large? I know you identified the photographs, but sometimes, Alice, I think it was a mistake that you didn't go to Lansing like they wanted you to and see with your own eyes—"

"I wouldn't want to go near that city, ever." Her lips had thinned.

"But when your peace of mind was at stake. . . ."

"No, Howard," she said. "And besides, you're absolutely wrong. From the first moment I never had the slightest doubt that *he* was the man who died—"

"But in that case—"

"And furthermore, it was only then, when my allergy started, that I really began to be afraid of him."

"But surely, Alice—" Calm substituted for anger in his manner. "Oh, I know you can't believe any of that occult rot your aunt was always falling for."

"No, I don't," she said. "It's something very different."

"What?"

But that question was not answered. Alice was looking down at the inside of her arm. He followed her gaze to where a white welt was rapidly filling one of the squares.

"What's it mean?" she asked nervously.

"Mean?" he almost yelled. "Why, you little dope, it means we've licked the thing at last! It means we've found the substance that causes your allergy. I'll call Renshaw right away and have him make up the shots."

HE PICKED up one of the vials, frowned, checked it against the area. "That's odd," he said. "HOUSEHOLD DUST. We've tried that a half dozen times. But then, of course, it's always different. . . ."

"Howard," she said, "I don't like it. I'm frightened."

He looked at her lovingly. "The little dope," he said to her softly. "She's about to be cured—and she's frightened." And

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he hugged her. She was cold in his arms.

But by the time they sat down to dinner, things were more like normal. The puffiness had gone out of her eyelids and he was briskly smiling.

"Got hold of Renshaw. He was very 'interested.' HOUSEHOLD DUST was one of his ideas. He's going down to the Lab tonight and will have the shots over early tomorrow. The sooner we start, the better. I also took the opportunity to phone Engstrand. He'll try to get over to fix the bell, this evening. Heard from Mrs. Easton's nurse too. Things aren't so well there. I'm pretty sure there'll be bad news by tomorrow morning at latest. I may have to rush over any minute. I hope it doesn't happen tonight, though."

It didn't and they spent a quiet evening —not even Engstrand showed up—which could have been very pleasant had Alice been a bit less pre-occupied.

But about three o'clock he was shaken out of sleep by her trembling. She was holding him tight.

"*He's* coming." Her whisper was whistly, laryngitic.

"What?" He sat up, half pulling her with him. "I'd better give you another eph—"

"Sh! What's that? Listen."

He rubbed his face. "Look Alice," after a moment, he said, "I'll go downstairs and make sure there's nothing there."

"No, don't!" she clung to him. For a minute or two they huddled there without speaking. Gradually his ears became attuned to the night sounds—the drone and mumble of the city, the house's faint, closer creakings. Something had happened to the street lamp and incongruous unmixed moonlight streamed through the window beyond the foot of the bed.

He was about to say something, when she let go of him and said, in a more normal voice, "There. It's gone."

She slipped out of bed, went to the window, opened it wider, and stood there, breathing deeply.

"You'll get cold, come back to bed," he told her.

"In a while."

The moonlight was in key with her flimsy nightgown. He got up, rummaged around for her quilted bathrobe and, in draping it around her, tried an embrace. She didn't respond.

He got back in bed and watched her. She had found a chair-arm and was looking out the window. The bathrobe had fallen back from her shoulders. He felt wide awake, his mind crawlingly active.

"You know, Alice," he said, "there may be a pschoanalytic angle to your fear."

"Yes?" She did not turn her head.

"Maybe, in a sense, your libido is still tied to the past. Unconsciously, you may still have that distorted conception of sex your aunt drilled into you, something sadistic and murderous. And it's possible your unconscious mind had tied your allergy in with it—you said it was a dusty couch. See what I'm getting at?"

She still looked out the window.

"It's an ugly idea and of course your conscious mind wouldn't entertain it for a moment, but your aunt's influence set the stage and, when all's said and done, *he* was your first experience of men. Maybe in some small way, your libido is still linked to . . . him."

She didn't say anything.

RATHER late next morning he awoke feeling sluggish and irritable. He got out of the room quietly, leaving her still asleep, breathing easily. As he was getting a second cup of coffee, a jarringly loud knocking summoned him to the door. It was a messenger with the shots from the Allergy Lab. On his way to the examination room he phoned Engstrand again, heard him promise he'd be over in a half hour sure, cut short a long-winded explanation as to what had tied up the electrican last night.

He started to phone Mrs. Easton's place, decided against it.

He heard Alice in the kitchen.

In the examination room he set some water to boil in the sterilizing pan, got out instruments. He opened the package from the Allergy Lab, frowned at the inscription HOUSEHOLD DUST, set down the container, walked over to the window, came back and frowned again, went to his office and dialed the Lab.

"Renshaw?"

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"Uh huh. Get the shots?"

"Yes, many thanks. But I was just wondering . . . you know, it's rather odd we should hit it with household dust after so many misses."

"Not so odd, when you consider. . . ."

"Yes, but I was wondering exactly where the stuff came from."

"Just a minute."

He shifted around in his swivel chair. In the kitchen Alice was humming a tune.

"Say, Howard, look, I'm awfully sorry, but Johnson seems to have gone off with the records. I'm afraid I won't be able to get hold of them 'til afternoon."

"Oh, that's all right. Just curiosity. You don't have to bother."

"No, I'll let you know. Well, I suppose you'll be making the first injection this morning?"

"Right away. You know we're both grateful to you for having hit on the substance responsible."

"No credit due me. Just a . . ." Renshaw chuckled ". . . shot in the dark."

Some twenty minutes later, when Alice came into the examination room, Howard was struck, to a degree that quite startled him, with how pretty and desirable she looked. She had put on a white dress and her smiling face showed no signs of last night's attack. For a moment he had the impulse to take her in his arms, but then he remembered last night and decided against it.

As he prepared to make the injection, she eyed the hypodermics, bronchoscope, and scalpels laid out on the sterile towel.

"What are those for?" she asked lightly.

"Just routine stuff, never use them."

"You know," she said laughingly, "I was an awful ninny last night. Maybe you're right about my libido. At any rate, I've put *him* out of my life forever. He can't ever get at me again. From now on, you're the only one."

HE GRINNED, very happily. Then his eyes grew serious and observant as he made the injection, first withdrawing the needle repeatedly to make sure there were no signs of venous blood. He watched her closely.

The phone jangled.

"Damn," he said. "That'll be Mrs. Easton's nurse. Come along with me."

HE HURRIED through the swinging door. She started after him.

But it wasn't Mrs. Easton's nurse. It was Renshaw.

"Found the records. Johnson didn't have them after all. Just misplaced. And there *is* something out of the way. That dust didn't come from there at all. It came from . . ."

There came a knocking. He strained to hear what Renshaw was saying.

"What?" He whipped out a pencil. "Say that again. Don't mind the noise. It's just our electrician coming to fix the bell. What was that city?"

The knocking was repeated.

"Yes, I've got that. And the exact address of the place the dust came from?"

There came a third and louder burst of knocking, which grew to a violent tattoo.

Finishing his scribbling, he hung up with a bare "Thanks," to Renshaw, and hurried to the door just as the knocking died.

There was no one there.

Then he realized. He hardly dared push open the door to the examination room, yet no one could have gone more quickly.

Alice's agonizingly arched, suffocated body was lying on the rug. Her heels, which just reached the hardwood flooring, made a final, weak knock-knock. Her throat was swollen like a toad's.

Before he made another movement he could not stop himself from glaring around, window and door, as if for an escaping intruder.

As he snatched for his instruments, knowing for an absolute certainty that it would be too late, a slip of paper floated down from his hand.

On it was scribbled, "LANCING. 1555 Kinsey Street."

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Not Human

BY BERT DAVID ROSS

I ECHOED Parhampsa's words: "Not human!" My first thought, considering the Hindu's broken English was that he had used the wrong word. "Don't you mean 'inhuman' ?"

"No my friend. This Djarling, whom our so unhappy Rene call her son—he is not human. He is a tulka." The dark unfathomable eyes of Parhampsa seemed to penetrate the inner workings of my being.

Heading by A. R. TILBURNE

Have you before ever met that mute, animalistic monstrosity—the tulka?

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"A tulka?" I groped frantically—somewhere I had heard that word. Something about it connoted a monstrosity—a mute, animalistic entity.

"I have not speak before," said Parhampsa, "because that Rene have not told me until today that she will stay here with you until all is finished."

I barely registered the ominous note in his words. I was struggling to make the hook-up between Djarling, Rene's six-foot curly-haired blond giant of a son, and a tulka.

"For your safety it is that I speak now," continued Parhampsa. "You notice how quickly he grow strong in the three days since we came ashore? And how Rene grow pale?"

That was the very thing which had made me bring Parhampsa out to the garden where we could talk alone—that almost miraculous change in Djarling in those few days since I had met the three of them at Smith's Cove in Seattle and brought them here to my home at the Heights.

"You mean," I asked, gripping the iron railing, "his sudden recovery has something to do with being 'not human'?"

"Yes, my friend. A tulka have no life of its own. Djarling exist only as part of Rene. She brought him into life—her life force feeds him—and he will dissolve when she die—"

I looked aghast at his passive face. "But how? How did she create him in the first place? And why was he so weak, so different—almost dead—when you landed, just three days ago?"

The picture flashed through my mind—my meeting them at the dock—Rene fighting off reporters, Parhampsa dignified and silent, a colorful turbaned being from the mystic East; and Djarling. Rene's wire a week earlier had not forewarned me of these two; it had only said:

ARRIVING EMPRESS THIBET MONDAY PLEASE MEET BOAT-URGENT.
RENE

Standing there in the waiting room as I first saw them, Rene was flushed and distraught by the persistence of a chap with a camera and his companion whom I recognized as the society reporter on the Gazette.

I hurried across the big waiting room to Rene's rescue. There was that strange expression in her eyes as she looked at Djarling standing between herself and the Hindu. Djarling was weaving unsteadily on his feet, his fashionable clothes bagging ridiculously, many sizes too large for him, his face and eyes those of a living corpse who might recently have escaped from some concentration camp.

From her expression, I judged him to be some stranger who was molesting her. But I was not even close enough to call, when I saw her face change. It flooded with pity. She reached for his hand and held it under her arm.

My attention jerked back to what Parhampsa was saying: "On shipboard, the long voyage from Bombay, Djarling have to sleep in a cabin apart from Rene—a cabin of steel."

He leaned against a madrona tree and gazed across the Sound as though he had answered everything.

"Look here!" I argued. "Of course he would sleep apart from her! Why should that make him sick?"

Parhampsa found it difficult to explain.

A tulka, it seemed, was a being whom by certain magic forms one created for some specific purpose. The size, age, sex and all physical attributes were identical with those of the picture formed in the mind of the one by whom or for whom the tulka was created.

A tulka could not eat nor speak. It needed no sleep. It need only touch the one who called it into being to be renewed in vigor. When its creator slept it lapsed into coma. When the creator died, it disintegrated.

Djarling had been created at the time of that fateful expedition across the Himalayas—the one on which Rene's husband Pierre Rodener the anthropologist was lost.

In the dangerous passes high in the jagged peaks and the ice-packed trails, Rene had seen those mute figures which joined the expedition, seeming to appear from nowhere. One of them walked at her side, holding her from slipping.

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"She insist on knowing who are these strange helpers," explained Parhampsa.

"When I tell her and explain, she ask if I create one for her, just as she picture him. That night she make the image before she sleep. In the morning he stand at her side, his hand touching her wrist when she awake. She name it Djarling."

"What did Pierre think about it? They say he used to be madly jealous of Rene. I never met him, you know."

"He did not like this Djarling. But he did not live to build his dislike into hate. Djarling push him off the trail. They tell you, in the newspaper that he slip. Not so. Djarling push him."

I could feel my back hair rise. "You mean —this thing—this Djarling—murdered—"

Parhampsa stopped me quickly with a sharp gesture.

"Remember: Djarling have no life of himself. He is but the expression of Rene. She feel angry for a moment—just as you feel at times. At that moment, Djarling was at her husband's side. He pushed him over the cliff."

The Hindu's deep searching eyes were fixed on me. I felt he was reading every thought that tumbled through my mind.

"And you ask," he put into words for me, "how this creature, this tulka, may be destroyed? I who have create him have power also to release him. I beg Rene, before we leave Thibet, to permit that I release him."

"Why didn't she—"

"She cry out: 'My Son! It is my Son! All my life I have seen him in my dreams—his curly golden hair and blue eyes and his beautiful body! I can not kill him now! I can not'!"

"My God! What are we going to do?" I implored.

Parhampsa answered in his quiet even voice: "It is for her, Rene, to say—not for me, though perhaps for you. Your Karma, through many lives, is linked with hers."

"Past lives, you mean? Or lives to come? I remember when I first met her as students together, how strongly I was drawn to her—"

"Yes, she tell me—about how she marry Professor Rodener because you not speak to her of marriage—"

"She told you that?" I cried. "I thought that she loved Rodener. I didn't want to come between her and the famous anthropologist—if she loved him!"

Parhampsa's dark eyes held a soft friendliness. "Perhaps now you will act, my friend. No?"

"But what can I do? If she is the only one who can give the word to destroy this monster—but tell me, Parhampsa: how *can* they be killed, or destroyed?"

"We who create them know also how to release them. If love for you give Rene strength to decide, then at her command I shall destroy Djarling and return his essence to my own land from which it came."

"Yes, for God's sake don't leave any of its germs lying around here. Fancy what Hitler would do with an unlimited army of tulkas, indestructible by any weapon—not eating—"

"But unless Rene rouse herself to beg this of me soon, she die. She grow weaker hour by hour. It is for you to know this I have left her side and come here to talk. This country is not like India. Here the air is full of strong vibration of hate, fear, lust—here tulka grow powerful."

I swung and started for the house, fast. Parhampsa with long strides went calmly at my side.

"Tell me," I asked, remembering the fate of Professor Rodener, "can Djarling harm me?"

"Only if Rene wish you harm. But I do not think she have in her heart any hate for you. Beside, I shall be near, watching, my friend. . . . Now, if you please," said Parhampsa, stopping, "while you talk to her for the next two hours I shall retire alone to the silence."

He turned down the terrace toward his room. I opened the rear door of the hall and went in.

I heard voices in the parlor. A wide-brimmed black missionary Stetson hung on the rack. I strode into the parlor, knowing I would find the well-known Reverend Tobias, lanky, black-garbed as always—and his eagle-nosed wife.

Rene rose as I stopped in the doorway. She said to me: "Oh Clark! I'm glad you came!" She steadied herself, holding to her

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chair. Her face—the dear Irish oval face that had risen in my memory whenever in the past I thought about getting married, was strangely transparent in the sunlight.

She struggled for energy to speak. "Reverend Tobias wants me to return with him. There is a meeting of the executive board of the Alumni Association at the White Building at three-thirty today. He wants me to confer with them. They are planning a series of lectures for me in the fall."

As though I had suddenly become clairvoyant I could see through the shell of pink powder carefully dusted on her cheeks to simulate health. Underneath I could see the tissues of her flesh, devitalized, chalk white.

I was shocked at seeing how near she was to collapse. But before I had time to reply, a door at the far side of the room opened and Djarling stood there, looking in.

He was buoyant with life. His clothes, which had been six inches too large for him only three days ago were tight now and his beautifully muscled shoulders and neck bulged above his open white sport shirt.

There was a little twitter of surprise and admiration from Mrs. Tobias. And the Reverend took a step forward, his eyebrows arching.

Rene swayed and clutched the chair.

"The blond devil!" flashed through my mind as sudden realization came to me. "That's why she is so weak—her strength has gone into—him!"

I heard Rene murmur imploringly: "Not now Djarling, please! I'll call you."

And the creature with its tight blond curls turned, smiling amiably and went out.

Reverend Tobias stood immobile, his face questioning. I caught Rene's haunted eyes.

I lied. I had to. They knew Rene had been married only three years. She could not introduce Djarling as her son!

"That's a friend of mine," I lied. "Djarling is his name. He's staying here with me, Reverend Tobias. He came across on the same boat with Rene: he and a very interesting Hindu named Parhampsa. . . . Djarling—sounds like 'darling' doesn't it?"

Rene lifted her eyes to mine in mute gratitude.

Angular Mrs. Tobias twittered: "I thought of course Mrs. Rodener said 'darling' and I couldn't imagine—"

"Now my dear," interrupted the Reverend in rounded pulpit tones.

I lied on: "Djarling had planned a set of tennis with Rene—with Mrs. Rodener. She needs exercise and rest. I don't like to see her start a lecture tour, not until she has regained her strength—"

The Reverend interrupted me: "But Mrs. Rodener must go with us to this meeting of the Alumni Association. It is very important. As Chairman, I have the responsibility—"

I helped Rene into a cloak and managed to whisper: "I *must* talk to you just as soon as you come home. Djarling is—"

* * * * *

I FELT that Rene, separated from Djarling, was out of danger of his sucking her precious life force. Parhampsa was not to be disturbed for almost two hours. I could do some concentrated thinking and get at the solution of this perplexing problem.

I knew I could think better if I ate. I went to the kitchen and the cook helped me ravage the refrigerator. I found a knuckle of ham, a pitcher of lemonade and celery. These, with some hard rye bread, I took to my study.

An hour later I went into the music room and played Brahms. His music always relieves me and makes it easier for me to think.

I do not know how long I played. A hand laid on my shoulder startled me and jerked me back to reality.

It was Parhampsa. "Where is Rene?" he demanded.

I told him. "She will phone when she is ready to come home and we shall drive—" He was standing motionless, his strange eyes wide. "Why—what is wrong?" I asked. "Did my playing—?"

"Come! Quickly! You know where this meeting is being held? Is your car fast? We must reach her before he does!" He looked at me almost with anger and made an imperious gesture as I remained passive.

"Before *he* does? Who? Whom do you mean?"

"Djarling! Hurry! Talk later!"

I stumbled from the bench. "But Djarling is—" I was following his quick stride

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across the room. "But look here, man—Djarling does not know where she is!"

I stopped, holding to the door, that he might realize that Djarling was in no danger of reaching her.

"Fool!" he exclaimed. "We have so little time! Come!"

Something about the tempo of his movements, his words—so different from his usual calm—sent a tremor of fear through me. I ran for the garage.

We roared out of the drive and along the winding asphalt through the Heights. It had been raining and I had to slow down for the dangerous curves and crossings. Finally I reached the arterial and then I made speed.

"How far?" Parhampsa asked me.

"In the White Building, center of town. That's nine miles. . . . But how will Djarling get there? How will he know where to find her? He didn't hear—"

"He would go to her across mountain or desert or sea—taking the shortest path. There is a link between them that guide him."

"But he's never been in city traffic, has he? How about that?" I had a sense of impotence even while asking the question.

"He will know. He has only to call upon her for guidance. Her intelligence live in him also—"

I focused on making my way down the heavy traffic of Ballard Avenue. Then I cut across the dangerous maze of Queen Anne streets and hit forty along Fifth Avenue to within a few blocks of Pike. Here I swung into a parking lot and called out to the attendant:

"Have a kid drive my car around the block until I come back—it'll be ten minutes or so." I expected, of course, that we were going to hurry Rene away from the meeting and take her home at once.

The red light stopped us at Fourth and Pike.

"There he is!" exclaimed Parhampsa.

I saw Djarling coming up Westlake. The streets were crowded but even at that distance I could see people make way for him and stop to turn and stare as he passed.

He was still in his white flannels, sport shirt open at the neck, his beautiful tight golden curls shining as the sun reflected from the rain on his hair.

His tennis shoes and cuffs of his trousers were bedraggled. I fancied that he had cut diagonally across Queen Anne Park through the grass.

"There's the green light—let's cross," I said to Parhampsa. "He'll have to stop for the red light and we'll have time to reach Rene—third floor on the—"

I froze. Cars had been moving, a solid stream. Behind the first of them an oasis formed; a big passenger bus in the middle of the block had held up traffic. Now it was coming down the hill from the Olympic Hotel, picking up speed.

Out from the dense crowd where Djarling stood, a little girl walked quickly, waving her hand at someone on the opposite curb and calling "Mamma! Mamma!"

A woman dashed to catch her and draw her back. She missed and she jumped back, herself, to safety.

Djarling nonchalantly followed the child, who was running now. He stopped leisurely and looked at the bus bearing straight down upon him.

There was a screech of brakes. The bus swung sideways. Djarling disappeared under the hood. The driver released the brakes, to roll free as the bus passed over him.

Women screamed. From the crowd near me I heard that strangest of human sounds—the sighing half-hysterical moan of horror mingled with the "Ah's" of gratification at witnessing a horrible accident first-hand.

Djarling lay transversely across the road, flattened like a figure of straw at his extremities, bulging in the middle.

The muddy treads of the huge dual tires had printed their passage across his flannels and across his white shirt and golden curls and his head was flattened to the thinness of a waffle. There was no sign of blood!

For a moment no one moved. Then a few men stepped from the curb and started toward him, tentatively. They hesitated, stopped to stare, and turned back.

"Watch!" Parhampsa whispered in my ear.

I could not believe what I actually witnessed.

The golden curls were moving as though

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some horrible putrescence had already set in. Then I saw that the whole head was swelling—reshaping itself! I could not drag my eyes from it to see if his flattened limbs were reforming too.

There was a movement in the crowd—a tensing as they pushed forward to watch this unbelievable thing. And from their throats rose gasps and cries. I heard the "kerplop" of women fainting and dropping on the sidewalk.

Djarling stirred, shook himself, and rose to his feet. His head, turned away from me, was flat on both sides as though it had merely been crushed half-flat in a press. Yet even as I stared, the ears and cheeks rounded out!

Smiling, he walked toward the curb!

The crowd fell back to either side making a passageway. Their faces were white with terror. But his glowed pink.

"Quick!" I heard Parhampsa urge. I realized that he had already dragged me halfway across the street. We dashed into the White Building behind Djarling.

And behind us streamed a host of frenzied mortals.

They were crying: "It is a Miracle Man! He was killed! I saw Him killed! And He is alive! He MUST be a Miracle Man!"

They crowded up the stairs behind us, shoving and crying out. Djarling never once looked back.

He went along the hall. And now I know how it was that he had walked the nine miles from my home to the center of the city in so short a time. I had to run to keep up with him.

The door opened, down the hall. The gaunt tall form of Reverend Tobias stood there, a sheaf of papers in one hand, the other hand raised, commanding silence.

Djarling pushed past him unconcerned almost upsetting the astounded Reverend.

"What is the meaning of this?" demanded Reverend Tobias looking first at me, then at Parhampsa and then staring dumbfounded at the mob in the hall.

Shouts made a bedlam in the marble-lined corridor. The foremost of the mob elbowed their way past me and shoved the Reverend aside. He caught one of them by the arm and pulled him to one side.

The excited man was answering the Reverend's rapid-fire questions. The mob kept pouring into the room, to the evident consternation of the group seated at a paper-strewn table.

Parhampsa and I went quickly across the room to Rene. Djarling had reached her side and was standing close to her, gripping her wrists with his hands, his head tilted back, his eyes partly closed.

Rene was white: in another minute she would have fainted. Her eyes sought mine. Parhampsa said, very low: "Make him stand away from you—quickly!" Rene obeyed, and the tulka, smiling, did as she told him at once.

I started to explain to Rene what had happened, when two policemen marched into the room. Reverend Tobias caught their elbows and drew them into a huddle with several of the mob. One of the officers kept looking across at us. Soon he came falteringly across the room. He stared at Djarling as though in awe. He spoke to me:

"This—this here guy in the flannels—he's living at your home in the Heights?"

"Yes, that is true," I answered.

"Well, Mister, we gotta take him out there right away. This thing that's happened—it'll cause a riot. We'll call a squad car—'taint safe fer you and him to walk on the streets—even s'posin' we could let you go."

"Bring the car around," I said. "Tell me which entrance and I'll have my party there. There are four of us—Mrs. Rodener here, and my two friends—"

"Sorry, Mister, I'll have to take you and the Hindu down to Headquarters to make a report—the chief'll want to know all about him—" looking blinkingly at Djarling.

I argued but I could not wangle permission even for Parhampsa to go with Rene. The policeman practically dragged us off with him. Before I left Rene I managed to whisper:

"I'll be home right away. Don't let Djarling ride beside you or touch you—*please!*"

And then, Parhampsa stalking ahead, the officer and I following, we made our way through the crowded hall.

It was an hour before the chief was ready to see us. He had been questioning wit-

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nesses brought in by other officers and had evidently been saving the interview with Parhampsa and myself until all the reporters who were in his good graces had arrived.

I phoned John, out at the house, to tell him to lock all the doors and windows after Rene and Djarling arrived.

"They're here already!" said my man. "And there's a policeman at every door and a whole string of 'em solid clear around the estate! What's happened?"

I did not try to explain. I asked Parhampsa what in God's name we should do.

"Do nothing," he said curtly. "Karma is more powerful than man. We can but try to hold back the tragedy."

"Tragedy! . . . But you've told me that you can destroy this beast just as soon as Rene gives permission. I'll get it from her. We'll race back to her just as soon as they let us out of here. . . . Tell me—what is there that can happen? What can Djarling do to her?"

Parhampsa was regarding me speculatively. His eyes reminded me of my father's that time in my childhood when he was debating whether or not to explain the facts of life to me.

"You must be told," he said finally. "Rene is very weak. She is close to the end. She grow faint—Djarling stand over her gripping her wrists. Suddenly her life surge into him. From that moment he talk and think while she lie, eyes open but unable to move or sleep!"

"Oh! God! How long could that go on? How could you stop it once it got that far?"

"Only by if she die or be killed can he be destroyed then. In the time of Bhudda a tulka ruled as Rajah Bondar. The true Rajah lay in the palace, a shell only. His wives kept him alive with milk and broths. The tulka ruled for years—years of crime and gluttony and terror. . . . In their lives since then, the wives have learned from the terrible Karma they brought upon themselves that it would have been less a sin to have cast the shell of the true Rajah into the fire—"

An officer interrupted beckoning us to follow him. The chief called me to the desk. I couldn't give him much satisfaction. I told him that the Being (they were all using this name for Djarling, though in quite a different sense than I used it) and Parhampsa had arrived three days before with Rene and I knew nothing about the past of either of the men. The chief called Parhampsa and started a long process of questioning. I saw a chance to make a break.

I excused myself to the reporter who had cornered me. I beckoned to an imaginary person near the door as though I wanted to speak to him. The crowd let me through.

Then at the door I called to someone in the hall: "Oh, Harry! Wait a minute—I want to talk to you!" It worked again.

I caught up with the fellow in the hall. He laughed, saying: "I guess you took me to be someone else." We went along to the washroom together. I knew that there was an entrance to it from both halls.

I went straight through the room and out into the other hall. From there on I made time. Once out on the avenue, where dusk had brought out the street lights, I ran. At the first drug store I popped into the phone booth and called a taxi. And then I remembered my car.

I wondered if the parking lot manager was still having a boy drive it around the block. I phoned the lot and told them to have my car at the curb, ready.

The taxi seemed to take an hour going the few blocks to the parking lot. But once I was in my own car and out of the downtown traffic, I made up for it.

The police stopped me at my home but they let me through when I identified myself. The crowds around the grounds were milling aimlessly or standing under the light of street lamps or in front of automobile headlights reading papers with big headlines—some rush edition undoubtedly of the "miracle."

John let me in and got me past the two lieutenants on the inside.

"Where is she?" I demanded. "Where is Mrs. Rodener?"

"She is in her room—and the man who hasn't spoken—the one all this fuss is about—he is with her. . . . Say, it isn't true what they're saying is it—"

I didn't wait to answer. I took the stairs three at a time and ran down the hall to her room.

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"Rene!" I called. "May I come in?"

There was no answer. My heart was pounding so hard I could hear nothing else as I stopped to listen.

"Rene!" I warned her. "I'm coming in!"

I opened the door.

She was there, lying on the bed and Djarling stood beside her holding her wrist tightly in his hands. I could see her hand white and fragile, hanging limp. He hadn't paid any attention to me. He was leaning, listening as though to hear signs of life in Rene.

I rushed to her and jerked her hand from him. Then I knelt down over her to shield her. I felt his two powerful hands circle my chest and lift me as effortlessly as if I had been a child instead of a two-hundred-pound man.

A wild idea had come to me on that drive home. It was uppermost in my mind now that I faced the crisis.

I left the room and hurried to the bathroom. I jerked out the medicine chest with the drugs and hypodermics. I had to read a lot of the labels before I found one I could use.

I remember wishing that I had used the darn kit at least once since I had stowed it there for an emergency.

Back in the room, at Rene's side, I knelt at her side, this time leaving Djarling in possession of her wrist. I stroked her hair. Djarling looked down at me blankly.

Then I slipped my right arm under her head as though to support it. And I worked the hypodermic out from inside my coat sleeve where I had concealed it. I got it ready, my thumb on the plunger, my forefinger hunting the spot on her neck where I could plunge the needle safely.

Parhampsa had said: "When she sleeps he loses consciousness." But would a drug make him drop her wrist—in time? My trembling hand forced the needle, quickly, clear in.

I saw her eyelids that had been wide open, flicker and relax. But I had no time to watch, for above me I heard an inhuman strangling moan—it was the same awful sound I once heard a huge pig make when our hired man plunged a knife deep in its throat to pierce its heart.

The whole weight of the tulka body—the Being who had conquered death!—fell forward across myself and Rene.

I struggled free and rolled him on the floor. My first thought was to hide the hypodermic. Then I realized that there was no need of that—I had not murdered him!

My next concern was to get the great heavy body into the adjoining bedroom. This I managed by lifting it on an upholstered chair on rollers and shoving chair and body through the door. I locked the door to the hall and bolted the windows.

And then I sat down at Rene's side and waited.

Half an hour later I went down to direct the lieutenants to order the cordon of police to give immediate entrance to Parhampsa when he arrived.

It was an hour before he joined me. He was calm and uncommunicative. He made no comment when I told him what I had done.

I asked: "How long will Rene have to remain unconscious before Djarling will shrink small enough so I can put him in the refrigerator?" I realized from Parhampsa's expression how grotesque my question must have sounded. My relief at getting the best of Djarling had stirred a kind of grisly humor in me.

"Why the refrigerator? Is that not where food is stored?"

"I have an extra one. You said the tulka would shrink if we kept him away from Rene and within steel walls. . . . There is about this large a space." I outlined with my hands.

"Three days," Parhampsa assured me.

"And will he keep growing smaller all the time—now that we have separated him from Rene?"

"Yes. But very slowly after she wake. It will be a month before he can be encased in a glass ball. A year later he will have shrink to size of a small diamond."

"Diamond?" I questioned. "You mean we could enclose him in a diamond and leave him there for good?"

"Yes. But you must guard it carefully—for if ever it be unsealed he will come back again and it will be to do over. But in three days when you wake Rene you must ask her

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to give permission for me to release him. That is safer."

* * * * *

I CALLED in a doctor and a nurse. They supplied nourishment to Rene intravenously. I kept her asleep three days.

The cordon of police remained, weary and harassed by the near-rioting mobs that milled about the place. Twice I had to appear on the balcony and address them by loud speaker. I assured them that the "Being" did not choose to show Himself!

And then, after stuffing the baby-sized mass of flabby flesh that had been Djarling, into the refrigerator, I let Rene wake.

I told her all that had happened. And I told her, too, what these three days at her bedside had brought clearly to me, that I loved her; I had always loved her!

When she bent her pale fragile face toward mine and gave me her lips I thought that we had won our victory. But even though Parhampsa added his pleas to mine, I could not bring her to give her consent to have Djarling released.

We had let the chief come to the estate to make a search after I phoned a frantic message to him that the "Being" was nowhere to be found!

I was so happy and buoyant by that time that I let my facetiousness rule me. I took the "Being"—he was pretty small by this time—and compressed him in a deep vegetable tray and covered him with a bunch of beets!

But I made my mistake when, a month later I had an idea how nice Djarling would look in the green crystal butter dish—it was so like a coffin!

Next day, while I was out on the links and Rene was busy preparing her lectures on Thibet, she went to the spare refrigerator for ice!

John told me, when I came in that Rene had been in her room all afternoon. He thought he had heard her weeping.

I ran up. She answered plaintively, saying that I might come in. She was covered up, in bed. When I went to her, she put back the warm white blankets and there, close against her side, was the pink baby-sized Thing!

It was moving, its tiny fists clutching one of her wrists!

"My God! Rene! You'll bring it back to life! Oh, why did you do this? Don't you *want* our freedom?"

She burst into sobs, reaching for my hand.

"Lover—I can't kill him! I can't! Parhampsa has begged me and so have you—but he seems a very part of myself! He is the son whom I have dreamed of—and I have a terrible feeling that I will kill my own son, if I give Parhampsa the right to disintegrate him. . . . What shall we do! . . . What is there we can do—unless I kill myself?"

She became hysterical. I tried to quiet her but could not. She let me take the Thing and wrap it in a blanket and put it at her side. I pinioned its arms so they could not reach her wrists, however.

I rang for John and whispered for him to call my doctor.

RENE, exhausted, fell asleep. The doc tiptoed in and I whispered to him to inject an opiate again.

This time I kept her unconscious until the Thing was small enough so that I could stuff him into a tin deposit box—I had to put him into something I could carry downtown to a rented locker in a cold storage room.

I walked right along with the mob on Eighth Avenue, carrying the "Being" in his tin box. I wondered how many of those I passed were still excited about the miraculous appearance and disappearance of the Miracle Man!

I wish now that I had put him into the diamond engagement ring which I gave Rene before we were married. Then he would always have been safe. But like a damn fool I had him poured into a hole the jeweler bored in a smaller diamond—one of those in the necklace I gave her.

A year ago the necklace was stolen!

Some jeweler will buy the necklace from a fence. He will notice that one of the stones is imperfect. He will cut it into smaller stones.

And Djarling, freed, across desert or sea or mountain will return! And it will all have to be done again!

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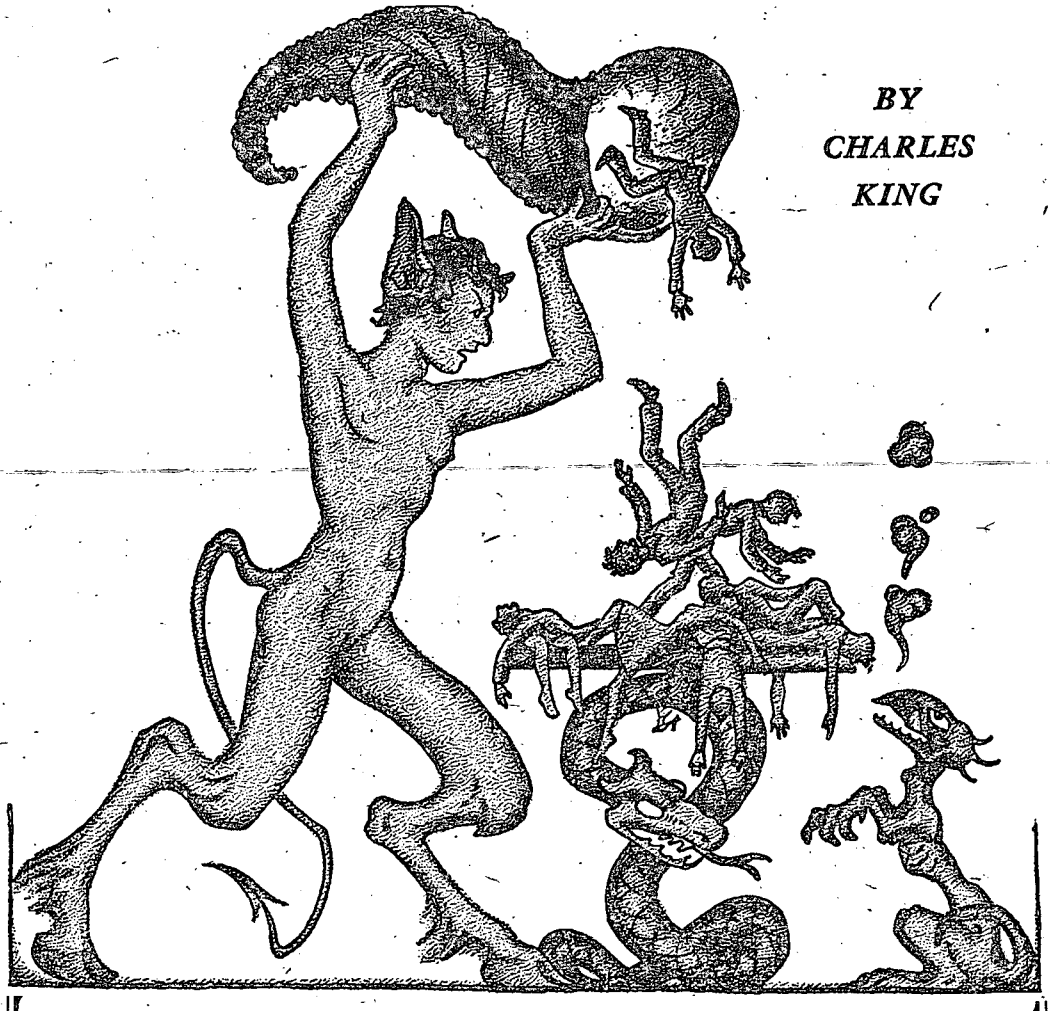
The Horn

BY CHARLES KING



Beware the Cornucopia; and fear knowing too much as you would the Devil!

"IT WON'T take more than a minute, Pop, come on." The voice was wheedling as if trying to extract a favor—which it was.

"I know, son, I know, but I'm very busy just now."

"Aw, Pop, it isn't often that I bother you." Then, quickly, anticipating the answer: "I gotta keep busy. It's for your sake really . . . so's I can keep out of your way. Honest."

Quick amusement flashed, and then died, in the other's eyes. "Doing it all for my sake, eh? Getting pretty smooth, aren't you?"

"Well . . . you know what I mean. After

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all it's for my collection . . . an' I got to practice, don't I?"

"Certainly," the other cut in smoothly, "so you can grow to be like me; follow in my—hum—footsteps. All right, just don't give me that routine again." And, once again, amusement flickered across his face.

"Swell, Pop, swell. My collection's fall-in' off on account of my experiments. . . ." But the other wasn't listening. Motionless, holding a pose that seemed impossible to maintain, it was as if he listened to far-off music. For long moments he remained thus, immobile, quiescent, and then his features wrinkled into a frank grin.

"Teach them a good lesson . . . a good one. Grown men . . . discussing . . . old wives' tales . . . " he muttered to himself. His hand swept upward, stopped at his head a second, and then continued its powerful upward flow.

"Thanks, Pop."

"Forget it, son . . . a pleasure."

Both chuckled as if sharing some old private joke that wore well with the telling.

THE town of Evergreen deserved its name. Nestling between protecting hills, it showed its gratitude by taking care of its trees, cozy dwellings and College. The inhabitants of Evergreen were proud of many things, but it was an innocent pride. They loved their valley which spelled home; they were rigorous in defense of their civic code and all it entailed; they delighted in the way that their children grew up straight and strong, benefited by the health-giving air that permeated Evergreen combined with the good wishes of all residents manifested towards each other; but, mostly, they were proud of their College.

For the College was the fount of all. It literally nurtured and tended the existence of the town. Generously endowed by a merchant tired of all big cities, it had been able to attract Professors of a sort who inevitably brought, in their wake, students hungry for liberally detailed knowledge. Students who, in spite of themselves, would spread the fame of Evergreen . . . and its fortune. Fortune, yes, because these students from the Earth's distant reaches brought money into the town. And the town loved the students.

This very moment, a portion of these students were listening with properly bated breath to the world-famous, and admired, Professor Savantte.

"Mythology, my young friends, is neither to be accepted easily . . . nor dismissed lightly." A bit pleased with his phrasing, he halted. Then, clearing his throat as if for great things to come: "Remember my words of a short space ago?"

Eager hands fought for recognition. From out the babel of voices phrases asserted themselves: "Yes, Professor, you were speaking of the Nurse of Zeus . . ." "It was a woman . . ." "No! A Goat!"

Professor Savantte's worn hand flapped a command for silence. "Please, young friends, let me review. I was lecturing upon the mythological *Amalthaea.* She has been described, as I've said before, as a giant goat which suckled the Master of mythological gods . . . *Zeus.* In gratitude—as set down by the most ancient of scholars—he set the goat amidst the very stars. . . ."

"Or as a nymph, Professor," an impatient voice sliced in.

"Quite. Or as a nymph. And, so the legend continues, one of the goat's horns was marvelously endowed with the virtue of becoming filled with whatever its possessor—any possessor—wished. Hence," the Professor calmly expounded, "it has been termed both 'horn of plenty' and 'cornucopia.' "

SEDATELY, in cultured accents, the voice mused on: "Think, think, my friends, if the mystic tales brought to us through the mediums of many minds and many tongues were true, what it would mean to possess something which represented one's desires from zero to infinity." Lost in imaginings, the Professor's voice died away.

"Professor!" broke in an eager voice, "I know what I would do. I'd endow all branches of Science so that they could work endlessly for the benefit of Mankind."

"That *is* silly," another objected. "If you could control the Cornucopia then there'd be no need for that. You could compel those benefits to emanate right from the 'Horn' itself. Isn't that right, Professor?"

Smiling, the Professor spoke. "It seems to me that what is most important is your

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cumulative reaction. None of you has evinced any selfish desire to turn this magical property—providing, of course, that you did possess it—to your own immediate desires. You all, and it is to your credit, would seek to benefit others. Students, I am proud of you. . . ."

"Look!"

More than a bit angry at being summarily cut off, once embarked upon a sea of rhetoric, Professor Savantte nevertheless turned with the others . . . and gaped.

A portion of one of the walls had assumed a slightly nebulous property. Before the astonished eyes of the observers the portion of wall rapidly took on a bewildering array of colors. Starting with the very light, it turned itself into darker and darker shades until the final result was one of sheer blackness; a blackness as impenetrable as solid matter.

"M-my goodness. . . ."

BUT the Professor's voice trailed into nothingness as a tiny vortex of movement introduced itself into the center of the pulsing black mass.

Faster and faster it whirled, attaining a speed causing acute dizziness to all who beheld it. Larger and larger it grew, forming a cone-shaped object comprising all the colors previously seen. Agonizingly beautiful, it held the onlookers silently spellbound. Then, when their emotions had been stretched to a point where several felt themselves upon the verge of tears, it detached itself completely from the black mass and dropped to the floor. . . .

A curved cone of ruby red.

As if impelled by a giant hand the onlookers circled about the object. For several moments the soundless tableau continued, and then again, as if stimulated by an outside power, all breathed the same word: *"Cornucopia."*

The Professor was the first to recover. "My friends, this . . . this is nonsense. We've been victims of a prank. Probably mass hypnotism . . . or . . . or. . . ."

"Yes, Professor, that's possible . . . except, er, do you recall that black spot on the wall?"

"Pah! An induced illusion!"

"Look."

PROFESSOR SAVANTTE looked—and gulped. It was still there. "I will conduct an experiment to prove that it is—ah—illusion." The Professor's voice was shaky, but he didn't lack courage. Picking up a handful of keys attached to a ring he tossed them at the black spot. They disappeared without a jingle. As simply as that.

In the stark silence that followed, the old man picked up the iridescent red cone and laid it upon his desk. In the slight interval that he'd held it, a strange surging force had coursed through him. It was not unpleasant; rather, it had given him a heady, though transitory, feeling of recaptured youth.

Quietly, the students circled about him and the faintly glowing object lying upon his desk. Even those who were frankly afraid of what they'd seen, found themselves joining the tight cluster. Whatever it was, that had entered their lives in so odd a fashion, it exerted an hypnotic compulsion that would not be denied.

"If it *is* the Cornucopia, students, then think how fortunate we are to have it thrust upon *us*. In the hands of evil men, or men capable of submerging the good of the many to the wilful gain of the few, it would be tragedy indeed." A slight pause. Then: "That is, assuming that we *are* confronted by the Cornucopia. Bye the bye, I'm sorry I threw my keys into that blackness; I wish I had them back. . . . *Ulp!"*

Gently easing from the red cone, the ring of keys tinkled onto the desk.

"Christ!"

Gone was all doubt. How it had come, or why, was no longer important; not worthy of further conjecture. What was uppermost in all minds was that they were the actual possessors of the horn of plenty . . . the horn that would spew out whatever—anything—they wished.

As the Professor had said, it was fortunate that the horn had not fallen among evil men. Such men would have immediately fought tooth and nail for the crimson-colored treasure. But, these were palpably men of education. They pondered the problem gravely, each occupied with his own thoughts. Thus, it took at least five minutes before they fell upon each other, collective madness in their eyes.

Swaying like a tree before the onslaught

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of loosed elements, the human group surged this way and that. Then, due to the demonic fury of blind, bloody combat, the tangled mass fell heavily to the floor. No quarter was asked; none was given. Knees jerked upward seeking to inflict mortal injury; teeth sank into soft flesh and ripped and tore; clawed fingers probed for eyeballs that could be crushed.

From the central point of the flailing, gouging mass, blood burbled outward in red ripples.

The youngest and the strongest were winning out—to no avail. In the heat and fire of the struggle they didn't notice that they were becoming smaller. On and on they fought until only one remained. Swaying to his feet, he shrieked with triumph . . . the shriek becoming a bleat of terror when he saw the desk looming above him like a wooden skyscraper, the horn irretrievably out of his reach. He toppled forward onto the still pulsing human mound.

"THANKS a lot, Pop. You were swell."

"That's all right, son, just put your experiments to good use."

"Don't worry about *that*. I want to make you proud of me, like I said."

Seriousness crept into the older one's voice. "Good boy. Though this latest group for your collection is a bit on the stupid side, they are still worthy of study. Make proper use of them."

"I sure will, Pop. I know that when I grow up I got to take your place an' . . . well, I want to be as good as you are."

A hand patted the younger one's head. "You will . . . you've got the stuff in you. And now, enough of talk. You have to study your collection and I have to be getting back to my work."

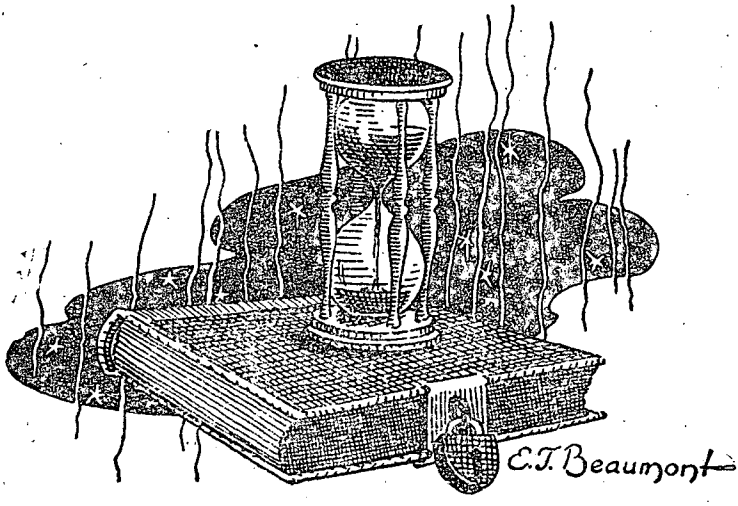
"Okay." Deftly the younger one's hand raised the glistening red cone, poised it at an angle, and let the contents tumble out. There were tiny whisperings and rustlings almost too faint to be heard.

A hand scooped up Professor Savantte and the students and lovingly laid them upon a board. Then, as the small sounds grew momentarily louder, one by one the group was pinned next to others who had ceased to struggle long, long ago.

"Here you are, Pop."

The older of the two reached down for the ruby cone. He swept it up and, again, his hands stopped at his head. The cone was placed to one side of the massive skull and immediately took hold as if impelled by incredible suction. It matched, in precise exactitude, the cone on the other side of the enormous head.

One last fond look at the absorbed youngster, busy at his work; a brief remark about " . . . incredible stupidity of the human race," and the older one strode away . . . hooves clacking sharply against the flooring, and forked tail swishing from side to side.



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The Machine

I LOOKED up from the dark field photo micrograph I had been studying and glanced out the window, and as quickly, my thoughts turned from the matter at hand to a totally irrelevant consideration of how graciously the seasons come and go here on the Palmer University campus. It seemed only yesterday, I mused, as I enjoyed the spring foliage of the trees that lined the walks, that I was an undergraduate here, just plain John Woodbright. Oh, it was inevitable then that I would go into medicine. That had been a consuming interest of mine since I had been in my early teens, but I thought then how concerned I'd been with midnight-campus pranks, beers at the corner restaurant, and my greatest worries were over passing some exam (I always did with flying colors) and the result of some athletic contest.

It was Dr. John Woodbright now, and many of the things that had then been wonderful dreams had come true. I had won an appointment to the Palmer Medical Research Staff under the brilliant Dr. Cardoza, and sooner than I had expected in my wildest flights of imagination.

Conscience pricked me to get back to the study I'd been making of strain structure in a strep bacteria, but the investigation was more or less routine and my gaze remained fixed outside. At thirty-five I joshed myself, and in spring a young man's thoughts still turn to thoughts of, well, spring. I got up from my laboratory table. Perhaps I'd take a turn around the campus, get some of this lovely April air. There was a small hall mirror in the recess where I kept my coat and hat. I looked in it and Dr. Woodbright looked back. Young but with dignity, intelligence, I flattered myself. A little pale, too much work, needs more air. You, Doctor? Yes, Doctor.

I stopped with my hand on the knob of the door that led outside. It was no use kidding myself. My tension and restlessness came from one thing. What was Dr. Cardoza doing downstairs in Room X? His warning, brusque, imperative, still rang in my ears.

"Woodbright, I don't want to be disturbed for anything under any circumstances! I must be left completely alone downstairs in X."

I knew Professor Dr. Henric Cardoza well enough after five years to realize he meant no affront to me. The man was burning with intensity and enthusiasm from the top of his close-cropped gray hair to the tips of his shoes. I knew Cardoza was puttering around with some phase of electronic research, but you don't ask questions of a superior. You wait. That was what I'd been doing and I was jittery down to the very core of my being.

AS I stood still with my hand on the knob, I heard the sudden sound of steps pounding up the stairs from our basement laboratory chambers. I heard Cardoza's voice calling and the door to my laboratory was abruptly thrown open and Henric Cardoza rushed in. My superior stood in front of me fuming.

"John!" he shook his head, "I'm not getting anywhere!"

He was perturbed, I could see with half an eye, and when Professor Cardoza was perturbed, he became voluble.

"I think I have a clew, I think I have a workable basis, and then, Poof," he waved his hand in the air expressively, "the whole theory folds."

He turned on his heel then, indicating with a jerk of his head that I was to follow him. My feelings were mixed as I went down the steps into Room X. Curiosity, of course, conjecture, made up a large part of my emotions, but truthfully I must confess a certain vague, intangible something beyond the frontiers of my mind hard to analyze. But if a word must be given in

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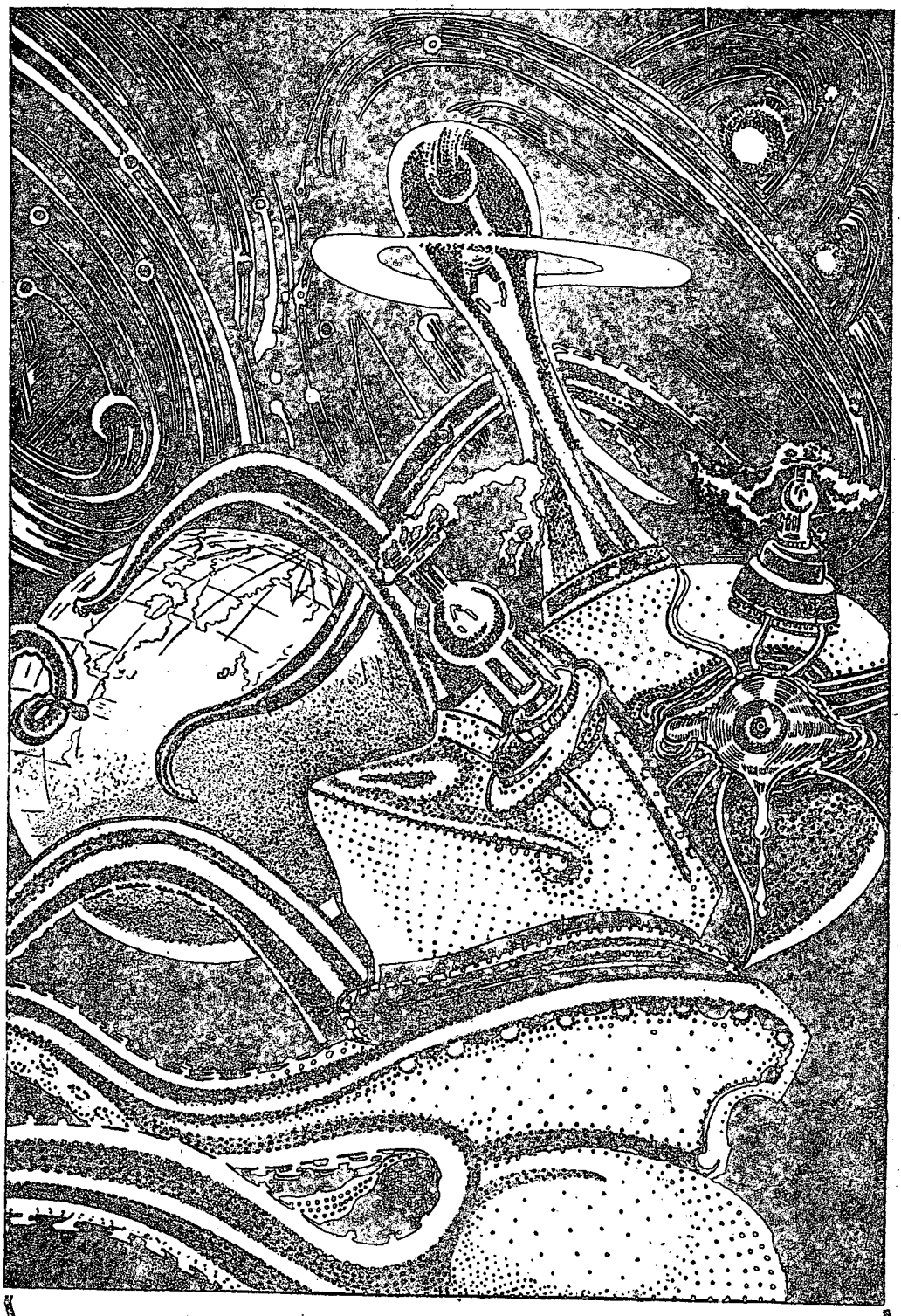

Never underestimate the power of a machine . . . especially this Machine!

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description, fear is as good as any other. Cardoza, I knew, was one of those brilliant and fanatical scientists to whom is given a span of years, his life, to delve into things, many of which perhaps we mortals were never meant to know. Cardoza had been one of those, for instance, to work on the atomic bomb. His part had been an important one and I realized full well that he was in no way affected by the panic and near-hysteria which had reverberated around the world following that fateful day in August, 1945, when the first A-bomb was exploded in the last war. Cardoza had been ecstatic in his triumph and the triumph of the other scientists. He seemed unconcerned with the potentialities of this energy monster he had worked so hard to bring into being.

I do not mean to imply that Professor Cardoza was not a good man. His contributions to science, to medical science in particular, had been both spectacular and humanitarian, but he was first and foremost a scientist. The humanitarianism was a coincidental by-product.

Thusly I was thinking as I stepped into the sound-proofed experimentally equipped room in the basement where Cardoza worked on many of his research projects. There was a roughly constructed elaborate-looking box-like machine in the corner, in rude frame almost like a human being, but with innumerable electrodes winding sinuously from it.

"What do you make of it?" asked the professor, gesturing.

I came closer. Parts of the mechanism were familiar to me. Other parts, most elaborate, undecipherable.

"You will recall," lectured Cardoza not waiting for me to answer, "that the early tradition of medicine was to construct apparati and appliances that did something to the patient, from the surgeon's scalpel to a stomach pump. Only in more recent years have we come to realize that the actions, motions, and even vibrations of the human being have a message for us if we had but a medium to interpret them. We know, of course," the professor went on, "that the electrocardiogram is a crude step in that direction taking as it does the actual electrical impulses from the heart and retaining them."

I nodded.

"The newer electroencephalogram is a more delicate and complicated machine taking its impulses from the brain."

I wondered what he was leading up to.

"John," he leaned towards me, his hands on a desk, "I believe I shall be able to devise a machine a thousand times more sensitive than the electroencephalogram, a machine which would magnify and record vibrations not only from the human heart and the human brain—but from the human soul!"

THE only fitting rejoinder to such a remark was complete awed silence. No one knew better than I did that Cardoza was no crackpot, no harum-scarum mad scientist. He believed what he had just told me. The thought was staggering. For perhaps the greatest mystery of life, the most closely guarded by nature, is that intangible thing which we, for want of a more exact term, call the soul. It is the fount of the life force itself. It is the thing which separates us from the animal. It has never been measured, and to my knowledge as a doctor, no sober-minded scientist has ever cared to look into the future and hazard a guess as to when it could be measured.

Dr. Cardoza, seeing my astonishment, frowned and flung his hands wide helplessly.

"But something escapes me, John. There is some mystery quotient, some aggregate of energy, some factor of radiation or receptivity to radiation which I have not as yet been able to put my fingers on. Lacking this, my machine is the useless, almost comical-looking contraption you see there in the corner, a skeleton without flash and blood, without life."

He finished, his eyes downcast, and my first inclination was to cross to him and put my hand on his shoulder. His last phrase drummed in my head though: "Without life." Without life, and I looked again at the monstrosity of wires that stood in the corner with its lead electrodes flowing out from it across the room like octopus tentacles. I am highly imaginative, a fact that has given me much pleasure, but now I shuddered. Without life? With life I pictured this machine-monster in the corner moving with Frankenstein precision, uncurling its

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tentacles—I turned my head away disciplining myself sharply. Cardoza had a brilliant idea here and a surge of enthusiasm quickly drowned my fears.

"Could you go over the ground again with me at your side? Possibly we could uncover the missing quotient."

He looked up with a smile, the first time I'd seen him happy in days and his expression was a deep compliment to me.

"I was hoping you'd say that, John. I know your work upstairs is important but I was wishing you'd check me on this thing."

He gripped his hands. "Tomorrow then we go to work again on my soul machine."

We both laughed and left Room X arm in arm.

The morning of the next day we spent in the X laboratory room. Cardoza went carefully over the ground he had covered, explaining in detail the avenues of investigation and experimentation he had followed only to turn back. He had incorporated some high-voltage apparatus for accelerating particles and these neutrons, combined with the sensitive electrical machine that was embodied in a cruder form in the already practicable electroencephalogram, formed the main nucleus of Cardoza's project.

We worked tirelessly until the clock pointed to one, then the professor stood up and rubbed his hand across his eyes. He had had many discouragements for many days and yet the relentless energy and stick-at-itness of the man was incredible to me. I must confess that the monstrosity of tubes and wires before us was no nearer to becoming the world's most finely tuned machine than it had been early that morning; no nearer in fact, as Cardoza said to me, than in the early days of his experiment weeks ago.

We went up the stairs, locked the door of Laboratory X. On the way out of the building we nodded to the janitor, old Bill Lowry. I liked old Bill. To be sure, I knew he tippled a bit but he was a spry sixty-five and man and boy had personally witnessed all the great events of the last half century (according to him). He and his fat white dog, Trixie, were a familiar sight around the campus.

We strode across the campus and I admired the newly planted tulip beds. Cardoza walked silently at my side, obviously depressed and deep in thought. We reached the dining hall and took the lift to the second floor where the faculty had a private eating place. We were barely seated when a rotund jolly man came into the room and hailed us. He was the head of the Medical School.

"Hello, Trowbridge," greeted Cardoza.

I rose and inclined my head. "Hello, Doctor."

Trowbridge sat with us and his bustling good humor transferred itself at least to me but the professor was still deep in gloom.

"What's wrong, Henric?" said Trowbridge.

Cardoza shook his head sadly. The Medical School director knew better than to push his colleague. He subsided and then after a moment: "What you boys need is to come along on one of my staff rounds at City Hospital. Got one scheduled for tomorrow. How about it, Cardoza?"

The professor nodded his head absently. "We'll see, Trowbridge. We'll see."

WE GOT up and walked back across the sunlit campus towards the Medical Research building, passing as we went laughing groups of young students, young men in their sweaters and slacks and girls in plaid skirts and ankle socks. I thought how carefree life was in those "bright college years" and wondered idly if it was quite fair that nature always prevents the individual from fully enjoying the phase of life he is in by making some other period seem more enticing.

We reached Research and Cardoza clumped down the stairs and fumbled with the lock. Old Bill Lowry had turned off the light and it was dark. Cardoza swore. "What the devil! I almost tripped."

He got the hall switch on and we both smiled. There was old Bill's dog lying in front of the door wagging her tail at us. She didn't seem to mind the professor brushing into her. When we opened X Trixie trotted in with us and lay down in the corner. We set to work and again time had no meaning.

It was, I think, some time after five when Cardoza gave an exclamation of excitement. He had tried an utterly revolutionary rearrangement of circuits and radiation units, and for one brief instant, the machine had

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pulsed with life. He sat back on the workbench and rubbed his hands with satisfaction. I looked at him, reading the message of triumph there.

"John," he said, "I think we are on the verge of a discovery far greater than the atomic bomb!"

"You mean, Doctor. . . ?"

"Our soul machine," nodded Professor Dr. Henric Cardoza, "is virtually a reality."

"But the precedent of the thing, the interpretation?" I queried, "What about that? Presuming the machine uses a graph and produces a film like that for electrocardiograms or an electroencephalogram, who is to decide what is normal, Professor? No one has ever before seen a recording of the human soul!"

Cardoza nodded impatiently. "Certainly, certainly, John, but these things are built up through practice. In that way we can discover the range of the norm. We have here the most delicate apparatus that has ever been invented. It is so delicate that I do not hesitate to say that it is human in both capacity and complexity, far more complicated than the human brain, John, as complicated as the human soul, the personality, the psyche, the very life and spiritual force of a man!"

We worked on feverishly, setting up the recording equipment which, similar to that used with an electrocardiogram, magnifies electrical impulses relayed on by the machine, recording them on film or paper which feeds out of the recorder like ticker tape.

I HAD not realized the hour until somewhere in the distance and upstairs, muted by the nearly sound-proof room we were in, I heard Bill calling to his dog. Trixie, who had lain quietly in the corner of the room sleeping through our epic efforts, got up slowly and shook herself. I was about to cross to the door to let the animal out when Cardoza raised his arm. I stopped.

"The dog! That's it! The dog shall be our first patient." Cardoza smiled at me. "People have said, John, that animals have no souls. Now we shall find out." He walked over to Trixie and picked up the fat white animal gently. He laid her on the table near the machine and I assisted him with the electrode leads, placing one on each paw, one on the head, and one around the chest.

THE dog lay quietly except for an occasional wag of her tail. With preparations completed, Cardoza stepped away. I moistened my lips.

"This won't hurt the animal, Professor?" I queried. I couldn't picture old Bill without his Trixie.

Henric Cardoza shook his head. "The principle is exactly the same as in the other electro machines, John. As you know with them, they act as recipients of impulses rather than as senders. No, I am not going to electrocute Trixie." This with a pat on her head.

He went to the elaborate apparatus then, pushed several levers and then raised his hand. The recording of the very life force itself was about to begin. I suppose I had expected something spectacular, a whir of machinery perhaps, a flash of electricity. There was nothing. Cardoza bent over the machine but I could tell from the cathodes that it was in operation. I watched Trixie but the dog, after one suspicious lick at the lead on her paw, simply put her head down and started to sleep. In a few moments the test was over and Cardoza and I removed the electrodes from Trixie. We opened the door and the dog scampered up the stairs, apparently none the worse for its experience.

On a tray beside the recorder lay the strip of paper, looking much like ticker tape, on which was registered—we knew not what. Perhaps you may recall that the records from, for instance, an electrocardiogram are a series of up and down lines mirroring the heartbeat. It looks something like a most regular range of exceedingly sharp mountains, one after another. The piece of paper we looked at together was incredible for its markings. They zigzagged every which way, turned upon themselves and darted abruptly here and there. The whole thing in aspect almost appeared humorous.

Cardoza, it was plain to see, was somewhat puzzled.

"This is hardly what I expected, John, but then we are beating a completely new path in science. We must have comparisons. Many of them." His face brightened. "John,

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lock up. I'm going upstairs to call Trowbridge."

He pounded out of the room like a youngster and disappeared up the stairs. I disconnected the apparatus, cleaned up our workbenches and turned off the lights. When I reached the next floor, Cardoza was obviously much pleased with himself.

"It's all arranged, John. I'm to take the machine over to City Hospital tomorrow. We're going to try it on the patients there."

The next day was memorable. I recall I awoke with something of the anticipation of a youngster on Christmas morning. By nine-thirty Cardoza and I had packed up the equipment with great care and with the aid of several University porters we transported it all over to City Hospital just beyond the limits of the campus.

Trowbridge met us. "Now what is this all about?" he fussed with genial deprecation.

"Trowbridge, I have a revolutionary machine here," Cardoza answered. "It is the most sensitive in the world. With it I believe endless avenues of research are open to us." He explained quickly the electrical and radiation principles.

Trowbridge listened. "But it's so completely new, Gentlemen!"

"Its principle is exactly the same as the other electro machines now in general use," persisted Cardoza. "John," he turned to me brusquely "assemble the machine. I shall be the first human patient."

My fingers leaped to life, and in a few moments the machine was set up, squatting in box-like monstrousness near the side of the room. Trowbridge inspected it minutely and nodded his head as Henric Cardoza explained the points of similarity between it and the electrocardiogram and electroencephalogram.

"But I have carried that principle on much further," the professor went on.

HE HURRIEDLY took off his coat, rolled up his sleeves and trousers legs. I strapped an electrode around his forehead. I put one on each arm, on each leg, and around his chest. It was then that I noticed Cardoza looking at the machine, and his look gave words to a feeling, nameless, that I had had from the moment I saw the monstrosity in Medical Research's Room X. There was a kind of strange magnetism about the machine. Cardoza felt it, sitting there ridiculously with wires streaming from him to a monstrous box, and I felt it. The professor wrenched his eyes away from his project.

"All right, John. Let us proceed."

I adjusted the levers as he had instructed me, pushed the proper ones and the radiation impulses were set. Trowbridge watched fascinatedly over my shoulder, glancing from the faceless front of the machine to Cardoza, to me, and then back to the machine again.

In a moment the brief test was done and I had taken the electrodes from Cardoza. He smiled, rose and indicated the paper strips to Trowbridge. We three bent over them. They were, in a way, completely dissimilar to those markings we had gotten from the dog and yet in their erratic mumbo-jumbo formation, there was a sameness. The designs in spots were, yes, I use the words advisedly, startlingly profane, even obscene. Trowbridge bent closer, his small eyes smaller.

"But what does all this prove? Of what have we recordings here, Cardoza?"

"The soul," said the professor through clenched teeth, his eyes on fire. "Trowbridge, we have captured man's soul."

The silence that followed those words seemed endless. Perhaps it would have been except for the commotion outside the City Hospital window. There were voices raised in alarm and finally the unmistakable short flat crack of a revolver. As though coming out of a trance, we three rushed to the window and looked out. We saw a patrolman with his revolver still smoking running up the street, and behind but at a safe distance, several Palmer students. When the procession was out of sight, we heard another report and then another.

Trowbridge rang a bell and a City Hospital attendant come in.

"What's going on, George?" he queried.

"A mad dog," said the attendant. "Dog on the campus started to attack people. We've got a few of them in the Emergency Room now. I guess the policeman got him though."

I did not, of course, think of Trixie, but

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my moment of horror and of dread realization was only postponed. We wheeled the machine into the halls and started upstairs to the wards with it. Dr. Trowbridge explained in turn to each floor doctor that the test was to be given only to certain types of patients, that it was to be explained to them beforehand, that it was of an experimental although completely harmless type.

By late afternoon, the machine had hitched its long sinuous electrodes to a dozen persons.

BACK at the Medical Research building we were greedily looking over the records when old Bill Lowry came staggering in. I have remarked before that Lowry was not averse to taking a drink but I had never seen the man in the state he was in that night. He could hardly stand. His eyes were bloodshot and he stumbled to the nearest chair and sank into it, his head in his hands, shaking all over and sobbing.

"Trixie," he mumbled, "my little Trixie."

Cardoza was impatient to get on with the reading of the soul machine records but I tried as best I could to find out the details of what was troubling Lowry. The story came out brokenly, haltingly, interspersed with sobs. It seems, when I had all the pieces of the narrative put together, that Trixie had suddenly gone berserk on the campus, had rushed around attacking students and biting them. Finally, one of the campus policemen had been forced to shoot the dog. It was inexplainable, old Bill wagged his head. Trixie had never been vicious. Trixie had never bitten anyone before. There was no explanation.

Cardoza was more and more impatient. "Come on, John," he said snappily. "We must get on with the work."

I left Lowry reluctantly then. The man was completely broken up and I feared what might happen to him. However, my professional responsibilities came first. I followed the professor down the stairs and we disappeared into Room X. The reports were interesting. Through them again ran the same pattern of outrageous markings, magnified in each one. To be sure, now we began to work out a certain pattern. The markings at first were absurdly irregular, then they settled down to a certain continuity. I can only describe the whole effect of these records though as unspeakable. There was something ominous here.

It was eleven o'clock that night when the extension phone in the lab where we were still working rang. It was Trowbridge. Cardoza answered and I could tell from his face that something had happened. He hung up after saying for the fourth time, "Impossible, impossible, my dear Trowbridge."

"What is it?" I whispered, a sense of fear gripping my heart.

"It's all utterly absurd," said the professor angrily. "It seems that Trowbridge is trying to tell me some poppycock about those people upon whom we did the tests earlier today."

"What? Tell you what, Professor?" I pushed.

His face set stubbornly. "Of course, it has nothing to do with our machine, John, but Trowbridge tells me that every one of those persons w[illegible] submitted for recordings today has reacted rather violently." He would say no more and retired grumpily a few minutes later.

The next day, bright and early, I went over to City Hospital. Trowbridge had spent the night there in conference with his staff. "Reaction" was hardly the word to describe what had happened to those dozen patients. They had gone utterly mad. They had perpetrated bestial acts upon themselves and others in the hospital. Subduing them had been a major task and additional attendants, nurses, and doctors had been hurried from nearby hospitals, in addition to all available police reserves. In spite of this, some of the apparently deranged persons had escaped.

"I cannot myself believe," said Trowbridge, his dull, tired eyes set in a pallid face, "that Cardoza's machine could have had this most devastating effect and yet the coincidence is too strong to ignore. Each and every one of those experimented upon has reacted in this violent way."

In my mind, I returned to what the professor had told Trowbridge about the workings of the machine. I wish to stress again that the full implications of the situation had not, as yet, occurred to any of us. I think even then Trowbridge's cursory examination of the machine and my own work upon it

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still convinced us that it was of the architecture familiarly set up to put it in lay terms for "receiving" purposes only.

We attempted feverishly to rationalize. Some of these patients were, to be sure, unstable. Possibly the procedure had frightened them into temporary states of insanity. Still, this was a hard one to swallow. If several of them had so reacted, it would have been reasonable but the hundred per cent similarity in symptomotology was incredible. More than that, it seemed impossible.

Then Trowbridge said something to me which found a responsive chord in my own thoughts.

"Perhaps it would be advisable to have the machine brought back to City for experimentation on a limited and carefully supervised basis, of course."

IT WAS, on the surface, an incredible remark for the head of a prominent medical school and the superintendent of a leading hospital to make about a contraption which had already apparently inspired such outrageous reactions in several of his patients. And yet I think I know what caused him to make it. I had thought fleetingly last night when I tossed and turned sleeplessly that Cardoza and I might have to give up the machine, scrap it as useless, and those thoughts, in turn, had been greeted by a profound distaste and unwillingness and a determination that nothing, come what might, must destroy the machine. Perhaps we three, Cardoza, Trowbridge, and myself were medical pioneers, unwilling to sacrifice something of such potentialities at the first discouragements, but I suspected then and there sitting with Dr. Trowbridge that morning in City Hospital that it was not an intellectual process but an emotional one. The machine had reached out with its strange beyond-normal magnetism to affect Trowbridge as it had Cardoza and myself.

I left the hospital then and Trowbridge, promising to discuss the matter with Cardoza. I walked slowly back across the campus to our laboratory. I heard faint noises from downstairs and quickly descended the steps to Room X where I found Cardoza working. He was in one of his black moods, and after a curt hello, he settled again into a bleak silence. He was puttering with some of the tubes and leads of the machine, but I noticed that his convictions concerning just what to do were not very strong, for after he changed something, inevitably I saw him chin in hand replace the object so that the adjustment remained as it had been.

"I can't understand it," he finally said petulantly turning towards me. "John, I am sure that we have stumbled across something of the greatest portent in medical history, in fact in human affairs, and it is our puny knowledge, our lack of knowledge . . ." he thumped long fingers against his forehead ". . . that makes the job of evaluating this device so difficult and complicated. Let us suppose," his voice was lower, confidential, "by some strange chance there was more than mere coincidence between the use of this," he patted the box-like side of his invention "and the violent reactions on the part of old Bill's dog and the patients at City Hospital. Don't you see, man? We have stumbled across the secret of insanity, the secret of mind, of personality!" Cardoza's face was lit with enthusiasm.

"What you say is intriguing, Doctor," I replied, "but we hardly have substantial evidence to prove one thing or another. As I see it," Cardoza having broken the silence, I felt I had the license to continue with my own opinions, "we have a machine here which electronically, shall we say, is highly gifted."

Cardoza nodded his head quickly and smiled approval at my choice of words.

"But we don't know yet for sure . . ." I broke in continuing with my chain of thought, ". . . what its gifts, its talents may be!"

WE SAT for some time going over again the technical data with which we had been concerned in building Cardoza's invention. Step by step, we checked, evaluated and discussed each point. At the end, and my wrist-watch told me some hours had passed, it was evening and we were no further along than when we had started. A machine—whose talents were undetermined. As we sat together in that little room gazing at the machine, I felt the beginning of the icy chill of premonition that I'd noticed

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before. I looked away, reassuring myself that I was tired, overworked, distraught at the series of unfortunate events that had occurred earlier at City Hospital connected with our device's introduction in the clinical field. As I turned my head, my eyes met Cardoza's and I saw that his face was as white as I am sure my own was. We stared at each other for a moment almost in surprise and then he looked away almost as if ashamed and I likewise.

We both rose. It wasn't for me to speak the words that were in my mind. Their reflection mirrored in Cardoza's face as well. Instead though, he testily admitted the thoughts we'd both been thinking by saying softly, "John, we must not give up on this invention now. We must not destroy it, for it is, I am sure, unique. It has a purpose and a meaning which in time will become self-evident. On that I would stake my reputation as a scientist!"

I nodded my head and turned towards the door. We exchanged goodnights and I tramped upstairs leaving Cardoza behind in Room X. I was disappointed, I knew, for I hoped for a moment—and desperately—that Cardoza would say abruptly with that finality that was so typical of him something like, "It's no good, John. Might as well dismantle the thing. It hasn't panned out." And yet there was something else. Do you believe that a man can be both disappointed and glad at the same time? I was.

I climbed another flight of stairs to my room. The top of the small Medical Research laboratory building was given over to our living quarters. My medium-sized chamber looked west. Cardoza's room, and the largest, was across the hall and at its carpeted end there was a third smaller room where occasionally one of our associates, when working late, would spend the night. I got into bed and lay there outside the covers trying to get enjoyment from the soft air that blew through the window and bathed my aching body in coolness. The chapel clock tolled twelve and the campus paths beneath my window were lonely and moon-bathed when I rose finally in desperation and hunted for my bottle of mild sedative pills. I swallowed one and then curiously stuck my head out the door into the hall. Cardoza's room across the way was dark, the door open, and the light was coming up from downstairs. He was obviously still in the laboratory. I thought for a moment of going down, but my fatigue and the fact that I'd just taken the sedative were arguments against it. I got into bed again thinking guiltily that I really should see what Cardoza was up to. I wish to God now that I had. As it was, I turned my head towards the window and soon fell into a deep slumber.

It was not the first of the horrific screams that awakened me, of that I am sure because when I finally stumbled out of bed and ran barefooted down the stairs with human cries of outrageous qualities ringing in my ears, I found that one of the college guards and a couple late-walking across the campus were already pounding at the front door. I paused in my race towards Room X to unbolt the door and then without so much as a word, I leaped down the stairs.

I don't know exactly what I expected to find. I was still in that state of befuddled numbness in which the suddenly awakened sleeper finds himself. Added to that were the still-potent effects of the sedative I'd taken. But had I discovered my superior locked in mortal combat with a burglar, I surely would not have been surprised, but what I did see as I stopped square in the center of the room shocked the rest of sleep and the soporific effects of the sedative clear out of my body.

I TURNED quickly, allowed the college guard to come into the room but then slammed the door and locked it behind him. This was no sight for the young couple to see. Let me recall that scene. It is clearer in my eyes than my own reflection in a shaving mirror. Cardoza was sitting in the rough wooden chair to one side of the machine and from him to his invention trailed sinuously across the floor the six electrodes clamped at his legs and arms and chest. I saw at the back of the machine a collection of used electrogram charts where they had spewed forth from the tracing mechanism. All this I took in in a fraction of a second and with this part of the chain, a conclusion readily supplied itself. Simply, Cardoza had hooked himself up to his invention to test its talents upon himself, its creator, and now the best description of my superior, the Professor

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Doctor, came in the blurted-out words of the guard who stood at my shoulder, jaw hanging open and eyes popping from his head: "My God," he uttered and turned to me shaking and white. "That isn't . . . that couldn't be Professor Cardoza!"

Even while he was speaking, I tore loose the electrodes and leads from Cardoza, but the man before me remained unchanged. It was true what the guard had said. This disheveled, contorted-featured, writhing and livid-faced creature could not—yet, of course, it was—my superior, the learned scientist, Dr. Cardoza, creator of the machine.

As another bubbling cry rose to his lips, the doughty guard turned for the door and even I fell back a step or so, but the professor made no move to leave his chair. It was as though he was held there by unseen forces. I knew even as I mechanically ordered the uniformed man with me to call City Hospital that it was no use, that we would never reclaim Cardoza here in the land of the sane, that he had crossed the Divide forever.

The guard was only too glad to escape from the room, and I heard him pounding up the stairs as I relocked the door. A thin line of saliva fell from the professor's mouth as his hands convulsively clenched the chair seat. I made then what in my conscience I know to have been a sincere and whole-hearted effort to turn upon the machine and wreck it. I chose another chair as a weapon and I advanced upon the squat ugly thing in the corner with its mass of tubes and electrical devices. I raised the chair to the full length of my arms and then I felt the emanations; I was humbled utterly and completely powerless first, and then subjugated. I believe, looking back, that mine was the last whole-hearted effort to destroy the machine. I struggled desperately against something that I did not understand and that was fearful in its strength. The chair fell harmlessly to the floor, splintering itself into pieces, and I backed away with a feeling of revulsion. At the time, I did not allow myself to dwell on the significance of what had just happened. I much preferred to think of it as a quirk in myself, that I was still master of my own fate, that free will still existed in this world and self-determination.

I bent again over Cardoza to see if there was anything that I could do. The eyes were staring and vacant though, those once-fine intelligent eyes. The mouth was a slack moist line and the nose expanded and contracted with each breath like a race horse.

IN a few moments the guard was back accompanied by one of the assistant custodians, another guard, and two doctors from the hospital. We got Cardoza upstairs. Well, I should say we carried him upstairs, and it took the combined efforts of the five of us to get him over to the hospital. By now, Trowbridge had been summoned and the other head doctors. It was evident that Cardoza had gone completely mad. I paced the floor the wee hours of that morning in Trowbridge's study. He waved his hands helplessly. "A terrible thing for the University. Tragic! I can't help thinking, Woodbright, that it has something to do with that machine."

I inclined my head without speaking.

"I forbid its use," he said suddenly, and I smiled. Yes, imagine that, I smiled to myself. There was nothing to smile about, John Woodbright. But I knew as though I'd been a clairvoyant what the next few steps would be. Trowbridge would come over to our laboratory. He would descend to Room X and he would order the destruction of Cardoza's invention. And then—then he would temporize, he would say how absurd it was to vent spleen upon an inanimate object. Why, we were no better than those who practiced witchcraft. His convictions would moderate and dissolve and he would leave Room X and the machine and go away. And, of course, that is exactly how it happened.

I slept on in the laboratory building, not that I wanted to particularly, but in spite of myself. I was always conscious of that squat box-like conglomeration of tubes and cathodes in the basement. I was its keeper and its subordinate. As time passed, Trowbridge came more and more often and he brought with him doctors from City Hospital, doctors from other hospitals throughout the city. Long ago the tracings made from Cardoza had been laid away. We didn't know enough to interpret them, but Trowbridge held increasingly long conferences down-

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stairs, and I, two flights up in my room looking out across the campus whereon, at least to me, the sun no longer shone, knew, knew I tell you, with exactitude what the next step would be.

Trowbridge would come to me and he would say—it would be something like this—that after conferring with the other learned medical men of his hospital and other hospitals it had been decided to move the machine out of this laboratory building. Would I mind installing it and operating it at City Hospital, and behind Trowbridge, with his small strained face and bulging eyes, I would see the image of the machine, and of course, that, too, was exactly how it happened.

The machine was installed in a first-floor experimental room of its own with doors opening out onto a terrace, and patients were brought to it day in and day out, brought to it as heathens sacrificed their own to native gods in the olden days. No one knew what the machine did to those with rheumatism or heart trouble or appendicitis or broken limbs, but one and all indiscriminately, they came to have the octopus-like leads fastened upon them. They came and were claimed.

I was something of a potentate. I had a small room off the machine's. Although most of the doctors at the hospital and many consultant physicians from outside had learned to operate the device, I was still the main authority on its operation.

Those were monotonous days but strangely made up of lethargic compliance to duty. Long since had I given up the thought of stepping close to that evil monster and destroying it, as it should be destroyed and as it could not be, for no man could stand before the machine, could stand near enough to do it harm and still have a will of his own, and monstrously enough, its greatest secret of all was becoming every day more apparent to me, that as it fed upon new humans and more souls, its powerful emanations grew, its circle of radiation increased; now the hospital, then the campus, the entire University would come under its power.

I realized now full well, remembering back to what Cardoza had said, those talents, those gifts. He had created a machine that was human and more. It was beyond human, for it wasn't as we had so fondly hoped, just a mechanism for recording the mysteries of personality and the soul; it took of people the very life force and gave it back impregnated with a limitless mechanical evil that was epidemic among those it touched or came close to. Somewhere was the dividing line, a day upon which we no longer thought of the machine as inanimate but knew at last that it lived. You cannot chronicle those things exactly in any diary of terror. All I know is that the machine liked to be wheeled out onto the terrace some days, and to it would come eagerly the instructors and professors of the University and the students, the young fresh clean girls and the straight young men coming to it eagerly as though to a lover, and it would pollute and capture and subjugate, and as I sat in my little room next to its big one, my head in my hands, I realized that this town was only the first, that it had the life force that it needed to expand to cover a county, a state, so that it was only a question of time before your town and yours and yours would fall under its spell; the nation, the world, the universe.

It was not impossible, it was not improbable. It was entirely logical, for I recalled during those countless days of terror the words of someone who had said that when Nature tired of the experiment of man, she would find a means first of destroying him, then of supplanting him with some other medium of life, and yet inevitable as this seemed, I could not reconcile myself to the thought of a universe taken over and controlled by such a wholly malign, mechanical and godless travesty of life as was this monstrosity.

I HAD much time to think of the past in those days of terror. My own undergraduate career on this campus, my working with Cardoza, and then it always struck me as so ironical that the same Cardoza was upstairs in the insane ward on the sixth floor from where, if he could clear the befuddlement and distortions of his brain away, he could look down and see on the terrace directly below the machine he had created, squatting almost daily before increasing numbers of disciples.

Time loses all significance in the face of

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fear and resignation of a deep enough quality, so that I can only guess that it was a Saturday, possibly a Thursday, late in August that the incredible happened. The machine had wanted to go out on the terrace, and after wheeling it there, I had returned to my room. An hour or two had passed and I hardly noticed the sound of people outside, it was so usual, these worshipful crowds. Then it was that I heard the crash, sharp, splintering and final.

Automatically I moved from my room and headed out to the terrace. You, elsewhere in the world in your small village or town or large city, did not know but you were reprieved at that moment. Perhaps some of you, a very few, saw the small item tucked away in some papers: *"NOTED SCIENTIST DIES. Palmer, August 19, 19—. Professor Henric Cardoza, world-famous scientist who figured prominently in atom bomb research and many other important scientific and medical investigations, fell or jumped to his death here today from the sixth floor of City Hospital where he had been confined for some time by illness. Authorities reveal that Cardoza's body narrowly missed several students who had been inspecting a recently developed diagnostic machine invented by the professor before his sickness and newly installed at City Hospital. His body crashed into the device, utterly wrecking it, Supervisor Trowbridge reported. It was the only machine of its type in the world."*

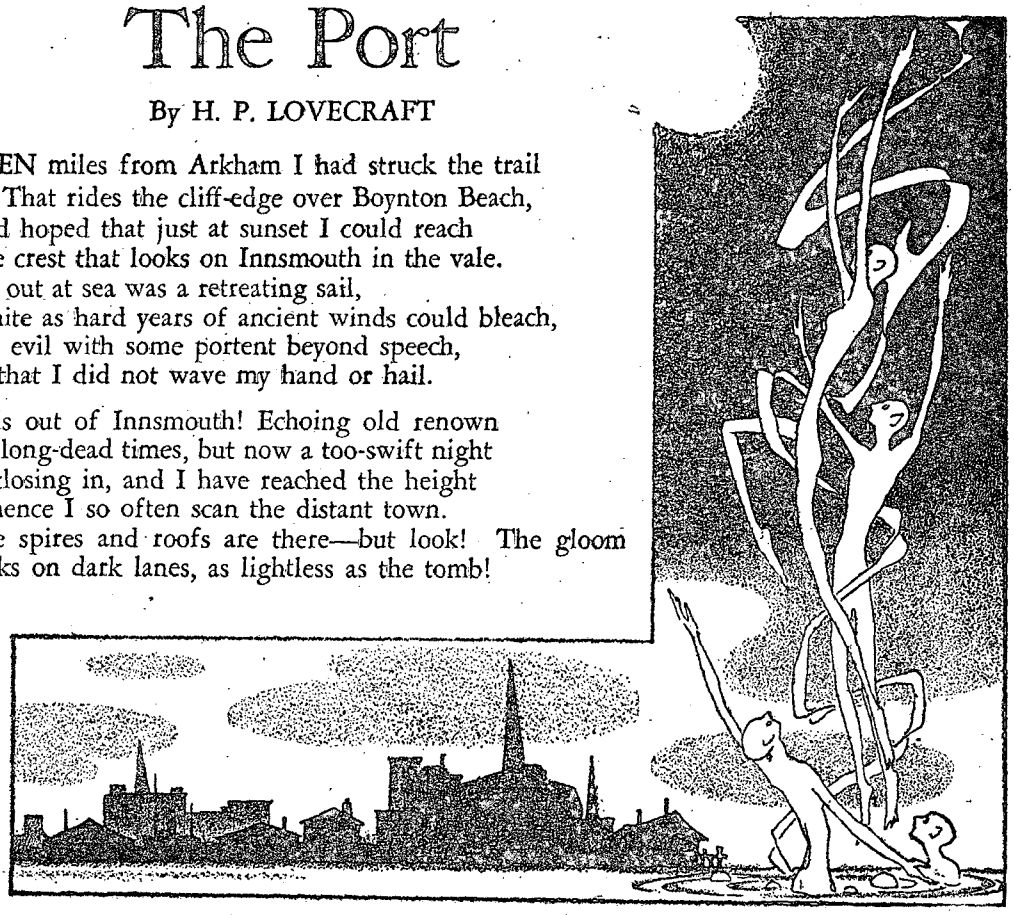
That late afternoon the sun came out at last to my eyes for the first time in months over the Palmer University campus, making it again just like any other college in any other town throughout the world.

The Port

By H. P. LOVECRAFT

TEN miles from Arkham I had struck the trail
That rides the cliff-edge over Boynton Beach,
And hoped that just at sunset I could reach
The crest that looks on Innsmouth in the vale.
Far out at sea was a retreating sail,
White as hard years of ancient winds could bleach,
But evil with some portent beyond speech,
So that I did not wave my hand or hail.

Sails out of Innsmouth! Echoing old renown
Of long-dead times, but now a too-swift night
Is closing in, and I have reached the height
Whence I so often scan the distant town.
The spires and roofs are there—but look! The gloom
Sinks on dark lanes, as lightless as the tomb!



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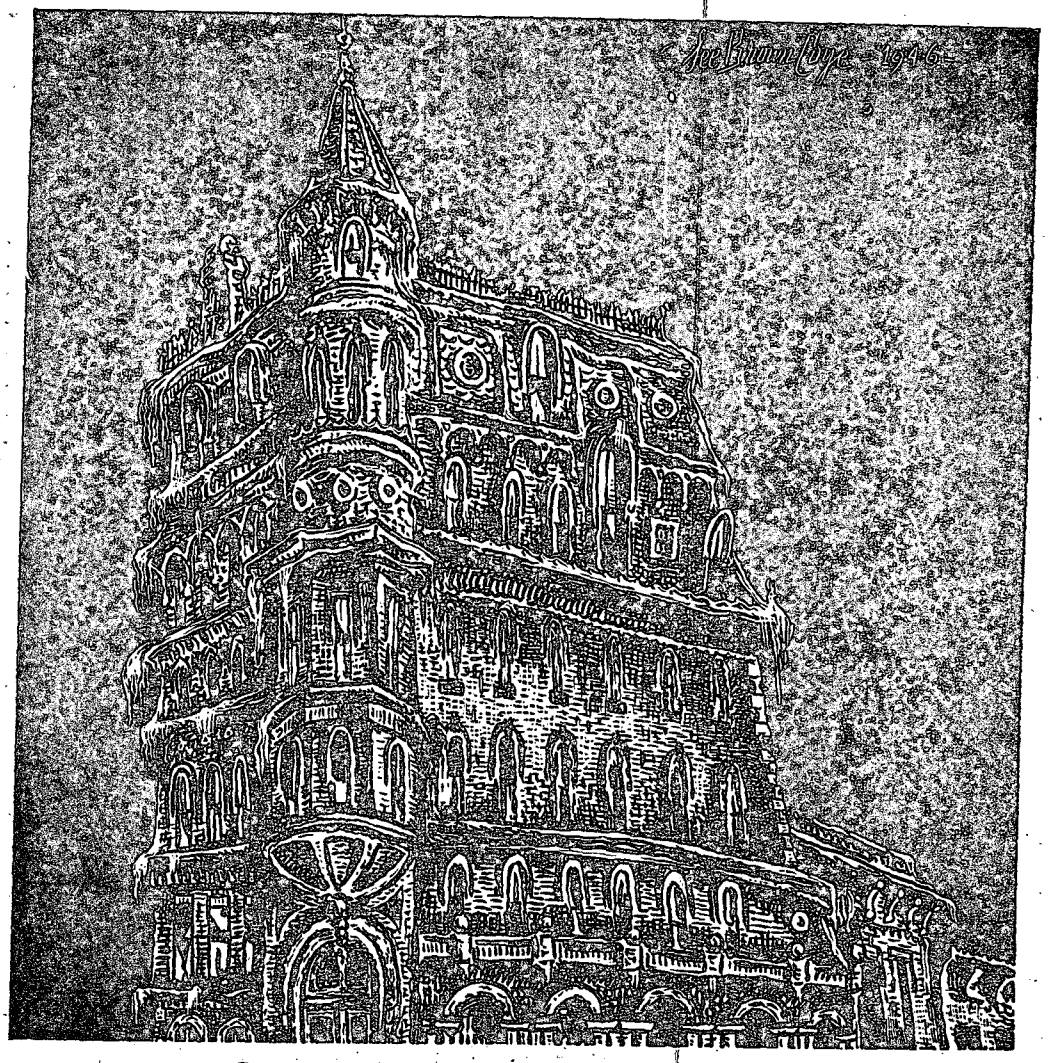

Six Flights to Terror

BY MANLY BANISTER

THE building was known in the city as the Heathcliff. No one could tell, without consulting the records, just how long it had been empty. It stood six stories above a corner lot, and for a couple of generations had frowned down upon the ebb and flow of city traffic at the cross-street. Its red brick facing, once grand,

Heading by LEE BROWN COYE

It was a dead thing, and dead things should be buried—
but how do you bury a building?

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was weathered now; sandstone cornices, copings, and window-sills were chipped and eroded by the elements, crusted with an accumulation of pigeon-droppings.

Roman-arched windows stared blindly with grimed panes. The corner was semi-cylindrical, topped with an angle-tower. Its bizarre style of romanesque architecture made of the Heathcliff an alien thing, as though it had been lifted bodily and transported here from its haunted place deep in a mysterious part of Europe.

Clem Lewis hated the building. It was a dead thing, and dead things should be buried. He hated it, too, because whenever he lifted his eyes from his work, it was there, cater-corner across the street, immense, brooding, sombre, and its many-windowed stare challenged his own with a sullen and unspeakable nastiness.

In Clem's mind, the Heathcliff had assumed a personality; rather the building had *impressed* its personality upon Clem's consciousness. There were dozens of buildings in the city he could look at and admire. There were hundreds he could scorn for meanness. There was one he could hate for the inimical life he fancied pulsed in its weathered structure.

Not that Clem Lewis believed the building lived. Not at first. Clem didn't have that much imagination. But it seemed to him that a spirit of malignance permeated the gloomy pile, reached across the street between them, and locked his uplifted glance in a silent struggle of will. He was repelled by it.

A glance at that sombre facade produced a response that was almost irresistible, an elemental urge that appealed to the baseness of his soul, to the part of him that could forswear light and reason and could grovel abjectly with fear of something unknown. The surface of his mind rejected the urge. The deep, murky coils of his subconscious responded to the eldritch call of the building as a violin string responds to the rasp of the fiddler's bow.

"Weird old pile of bricks," Clem one day told the office at large. "It ought to be torn down."

He fell silent from the sudden thrill that shot through him. Did the thought delight him? Or was the thrill a warning, an acknowledgment that he felt the subtly expressed resentment of a thing, an entity, that could read his thoughts?

Clem's attitude toward the building did not really congeal into a concrete feeling of loathing until the night he met Ann Summers. He didn't know that was her name at the time. He found it out later. She plummeted into his arms out of the lobby of the Heathcliff, a part of the building still in occasional use. She struck him with such hurried force he had to fling his arms about her to keep them both from tumbling to the sidewalk.

IT WAS as late as ten o'clock, and the wan shine of the street lamps made glittering highlights on the rain-wet street, piled moist shadows in the roman-arched entrance to the Heathcliff. He saw her face in this light, pale and strained-looking beneath its essential prettiness. Her large, dark eyes were opened wide, fixed with an expression of terror that was familiar to his experience. And while he held her momentarily, she clutched tiny, white hands at the sleeves of his topcoat, and her knuckles stood out whiter still than the flesh around them. The drizzling rain moistened chestnut curls, gathered in a damp film upon her fear-grayed cheeks and pertly turned up nose. It stood in glistening beads upon the little red felt hat she wore. Clem caught his breath first.

"Uh, I beg your pardon, miss."

The girl drew back at the sound of his voice. She still clutched the topcoat, and her arms began to shake while her eyes searched his face and the fear slowly went out of them.

"You're cold," he said for lack of anything better to say.

She cast a quick, still-frightened glance into the yellow-lit lobby of the Heathcliff, looked back into his face and forced a pallid smile.

"No. I—I'm sorry I bumped you. I wasn't looking."

She made as if to draw away, but he held her.

"Something is wrong," he said flatly. "You came dashing out of that place like a league of devils was after you. Maybe you need the police?"

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She laughed shakily. "No . . . certainly not the police! They might arrest *me* . . . for trespassing!" She took a quick breath and released it with a flutterly sigh. "I'm being silly. You'll never forgive me. Now, let me go, please."

Clem let her go. She walked unsteadily a few steps, then seemed to gather assurance in her pace and continued rapidly, high heels tap-tapping on the pavement. The wind whispered softly along the weathered facade of the ancient building. The city stirred and grumbled around him in nocturnal passivity. He shrugged and continued his way, thinking of the dismal structure and of the strangely beautiful young woman it had expelled into his arms.

He waited at the next corner for a street car. When one came along, he found that, for no accountable reason, he was shaking. He was still shaking twenty minutes later when he let himself into his darkened apartment.

A couple of slugs of whiskey claimed him sufficiently for a shower and a try at sleep. He dreamed. He dreamed the girl again came flying out of the repulsive maw of the building into his arms. He held her, held her tightly against an insidious force that pulled and worried at her, tried to drag her back into hideous darkness fraught with a pulsing menace of unguessable horrors.

He awoke with a start, pajamas sweat-soaked, and got shakily out of bed. Before he could twist the lamp and shed comforting light upon the room, his glance strayed to the pale oblong of the window. His chest tightened with foreboding. Something was out there—something he had to see. He went to the window and stared . . . and reeled . . . and he could not stop staring. The space across the street, usually occupied by a row of small bungalows, bulked now with black shadow, a gruesomely distorted shape that fanned upward against the stars in a clearing sky . . . a faint fantasmic illusion that bore the unmistakable outlines of the Heathcliff building.

As Clem Lewis stared, eyes frozen with terror in the pallid mask of his face, the building stared back, grim, many-eyed, eery and threatening.

The air whistled from Clem's lungs, and he staggered back, thrusting himself away from the sight. But he had to look. He dragged his eyes around in their sockets. The light of a crescent moon glittered on the damp roofs of a row of neat little bungalows. . . .

THE office staff whispered behind Clem's back. They talked about his service in the war, and wondered if it had *affected* him. He's so *strange*. He's so *nervous*. Do you suppose he's got combat fatigue, or whatever it is veterans of the combat zone are supposed to have? Clem needs a *rest*. Maybe he went back to work too *soon*, after he got out of the service.

The whispers reached the main office. Job Mortenson, general manager, had Clem in his office and off-hand gave him a week's vacation.

"You're working too hard," he said in a kindly tone, "and not getting enough sleep. Get away from the city. Spend a week in the country and rest up. The company can spare you right now, and your pay will go on as if you were here."

Clem was tempted to refuse. But you didn't refuse a week's vacation with pay. And you didn't tell the boss you weren't overworking, even when you had hardly enough work to keep you busy; certainly, not enough to keep your mind from gnawing at the dreadful, startling knowledge *that you had a building following you!*

Was his mind slipping, Clem wondered? He remembered men carried screaming from the battlefield, minds more horribly fissured and bleeding than their bodies could be and live. For a week now, the Heathcliff building had mercilessly stalked him. At least once each night it positioned itself across the street from his apartment and watched him, called to him through the tangled communication maze of his subconscious until he responded by going to the window and revelling in horror at the sight.

Once he had dressed hurriedly and bolted from the illusion. Down the street was an all-night hamburger stand, and he had closed himself within its steamy warmth and tried to calm his shaking nerves with hot, black coffee. And while he sipped at the thick lip of the mug, the building had searched him out. Looking out through the misted windows, he saw it there across the

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street, looking in upon him with its many-windowed gaze.

He was never alone any more. The building always pursued him. He could neither avoid it nor leave it behind. Going away from the city might bring relief. Where should he go? He closed his mind on the thought. He dared not think the name of the place that sprang to his mind. The building would read his mind and follow him there.

He packed, called a taxi, and directed the driver upon a roundabout course toward the station.

He met her again there . . . lovely, frightened Ann Summers. He looked at her and recognition was swift. She stood out from the crowd of shuffling, hurrying travellers. She crouched, rather than sat, in the waiting room seat, and her white-knuckled hand was clenched tightly on the stub of a railroad ticket. A small bag rested on the floor at her feet. He dropped into the seat beside her with the familiarity of an old acquaintance.

"We meet again," he said, with an attempt at lightness.

Dark, liquid eyes searched his face, glimmered, and the light went out.

"I don't know you," she said stolidly.

"Come now," he said shrugging. "We're both running from the same thing. Why shouldn't we run together?" He noticed shrewdly her sudden start of fright. "Does it follow you, too?" he asked.

"I don't—don't know what you mean," her tone was dry, thick. She darted quick glances about, as if seeking an exit, then her eyes came back to his face. There was resignation in her expression.

"You know all about it," she said tonelessly.

He kicked his suitcase. "I don't think we can run away from it, either," he confessed. "Wherever we go, that damned building will hound us out. It does follow you, doesn't it?"

"I—oh, yes! You couldn't know, unless. . . ."

"Unless it follows me, too," he finished for her. "It does. And unless we're both crazy, it's more than I can understand. Meeting you here has given me a better idea than running away."

Her eyes grew large with hope.

"Suppose you cash in your ticket and let me take you home," he suggested. "We'll stick it out . . . together."

SHE stiffened momentarily, then relaxed and nodded pitifully. He said no more, even after she got a refund on her ticket and came back, and he took her to a cab, and the cab took them to the address she gave.

"Will you come up?" she asked shyly.

Clem looked down at his suitcase.

"I'll see you tomorrow."

"You haven't told me your name," she reminded him.

He told her, and learned what she was called. "You need a good sleep," he said. "Don't look out the window tonight, y'hear?"

She shuddered. He forced a grin.

"Chin up. I'll be around tomorrow evening . . . early. We'll do the town. Promise you won't try to run out on me?"

"If I do," she smiled sadly, "I'm afraid it—*it* will bring me back!"

He waved to her as the cab drove away. She looked little and alone standing beside her bag on the pavement.

So he knew her name and he knew her fear. The fear was real. It was his own fear. Not madness. Malignance. The evil life of the building was something beyond his understanding. One is so helpless in the face of a thing one does not and can not understand. To whom could he go for an explanation? Nobody. They would call him mad. Where could he run? No place. The monster would seek him out. What could he do? Stay and fight! How? That was his problem.

THEY had seen a show and had a drink at El Kasbah. He took her home in a cab. He was only going to stay a minute. He was confident everything would be all right. He could not know that the building was . . . jealous.

Ann's compartment was small and neat, like herself. You could see that at one time or another she had relegated most of the landlord's furniture to the basement or to other, less fortunate apartments. The tastefully arranged furnishings reflected her own temperament and character. Clem settled

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comfortably in a lounge chair. Ann mixed cocktails in the diminutive kitchen, chatted brightly with him through the open door. She brought him the mixed drink.

"I've been thinking," he said, lending an ear to the clink of ice in the glass.

Her expression became drawn. All evening she had been trying to be gay, trying to forget the incredible onus of their lives. There was a genuine attraction between these two. The evening's association had deepened the hold each had upon the other's feelings. They both knew it.

"Somehow," Clem went on, "we've run across something that wasn't meant to be discovered. I don't know what's behind it. Maybe it's a kind of illusion. For all we know, half the town may be affected the same way we are. And everybody hiding it . . . mob hysteria."

"Do you really believe that?" Ann asked him.

"No. That was just a slap-dab attempt at scientific explanation. Psychology. That sort of thing. When I first saw you, you were running out of that building . . . running away from something. I've seen guys running and looking like you looked. But they knew what they were running from. I've wondered. What were you doing there?"

Ann furrowed her forehead. "I—I was passing by. All of a sudden, I had an urge to go in . . . see what the place looked like inside. There was only that little light on in the lobby. It was terribly dark on the stairs. Even darker up above. I listened, but the place was so quiet I could hear the blood rushing in my ears. I don't know why, but I started to go up to the second floor. I hadn't even a flashlight with me. I think I almost got there, then . . . then I got frightened."

Her face had gone white. "I don't know why I was frightened.... I didn't know then. I was so grateful to... to you for being there when I ran out."

Clem drained his glass.

"I'm glad I was there," he said quietly. "Though it wasn't until after I met you that the building began showing up wherever I went."

"It—it was here that night when I got home," Ann confessed. "I didn't scream. I was too scared to scream. It just sat quietly across the street, and it seemed to be watching my windows. I ran into the house. When I could bring myself to look out the window, it . . . it was gone. After that, I saw it often, even in the daytime, and all over town. I never dared tell anybody about it before."

"There is life in a city," Clem mused, "life that is beyond the life of the people who live there. The people build the city, then the city starts building the people. It twists them about and shapes their lives to fit into its own destiny. You would think that is allegory, but it is fact. We never consider the city itself as being sentient. It borrows the life of the people. Could the city, or part of it, borrow life . . . and not give it back?"

"Suppose it could. Why does that horrible building follow us wherever we go? How does it do it?"

"I could explain that in too many ways to make sense. Say it is alive. Say it has super intelligence. It might hop through the fourth dimension. It might work on our minds and make us think we see it. Probably, we'll never know. I don't know why it does it, either. Maybe because we've guessed its secret . . . found out what wasn't meant to be discovered."

Ann suddenly buried her face in her hands. "I'm afraid, Clem! I'm afraid to be alone. Don't ever let me be alone, will you?"

Clem shifted uneasily, reached out and took her hand.

"Ann, we have to stand together to fight it. I don't know how we will, but we will. We'll be married tomorrow, then. . . ."

She squeezed his hand, and the response was enough for Clem. A moment later, he was kissing her, murmuring comfortingly. After a while, he kissed her one last time and went away.

CLEM awoke to the shrilling alarm of the telephone. He stumbled from the bedroom into the living room, bumping his shins on a rocker on the way. It was Ann calling. There was hysteria in her voice.

"Clem! Is that you, Clem? Oh, thank God you're there! Clem, it's here . . . the building. Outside my window. It . . . it doesn't go away, Clem. I shouted and screamed at it to go away. It's still there.

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It has a . . . a voice, Clem. Like a big bell. It's calling me. I . . . I . . . *Clem!*"

Her voice died away in a whimper of terror. Clem rattled the instrument but got no further response. Cursing savagely, he groped for the light switch, found it, and bounded into his clothes. He left the house running. Two blocks away, he halted, breathless, and signalled a cruising cab.

The cab waited while he bounded up the stairs to Ann's apartment. There was no answer to his thunderous knocking. The door was unlocked. He flung it open and went in. His own hoarse breathing whistled on the blanket of silence.

Ann was not there. She was not in the sitting room. Not in the ridiculous little kitchenette. Not in the bath. Ann was not anywhere. He looked for a note and found none. The phone had been returned carefully to its cradle.

He looked in the closet. Ann's coat was on its hanger, her pert little red hat on the shelf. Slips and dresses hung neatly. Several pairs of shoes toed an invisible line on the floor. What had Ann worn when she went out? Where had she gone?

He went slowly back to the cab, a haunting fear nagging at his mind. Since leaving Ann, he had not been stalked by the building. He felt all of a sudden as if a great load were gone from his mind. What did that mean? He was not even interested in speculating about the building. Somewhere this night, his fear had left him completely. But Ann!

A pain pierced his chest. What had she said? The building was calling to her. It had a voice, like a . . . a big bell. Had she answered that voice? The thought was nonsense, but had she gone to that building downtown? He gave crisp orders to the driver.

Tires swished on the pavement as the cab drove off and left him standing before the dark maw of the Heathcliff building. A bitter chill was in the air, and a few snowflakes had begun to drift down. An earlier rain had frozen as it fell, and the pavement was icy. It was quiet, restlessly quiet as the heart of a city is at three o'clock in the morning. It began to snow harder. Clem hunched his shoulders against the bitter wind and dodged into the building entrance.

The door should have been locked. It was not. The yellow bulb in the deserted lobby had long since been extinguished. It was as black as the throat of Hell inside, and cold.

Clem contacted a pencil-flash in his pocket. It cast a pale yellow cone through the darkness. He stood at the foot of the stairs and shot the gleam upward. Somewhere up there, the caretaker should be sleeping.

He could see nothing beyond the feeble range of his torch except greater more all-enshrouding blackness. He started up stealthily.

"Clem!"

THE voice sounded close—very close, almost as if it originated inside his own skull. It had been Ann's voice. He halted and listened.

"Go away, Clem!"

Undoubtedly, it was Ann speaking to him. But the words still sounded as if they came from inside his skull. Or perhaps from just ahead, up the stairs. He advanced cautiously, whispering, and damp, mouldy walls flung the whisper back at him.

"Take it easy, Ann, dear. I'm coming."

"No Clem. Go away. You can't help me. It won't harm you, if you go away."

He was sure, now, that the voice came from just a little way ahead of him, up the stairs. He advanced softly.

They were crazy, he thought, both of them. At least, he had been. Imagining things about a ratty old building. Ann must have gone under, wandering around in this macabre old shell. He'd have to find her and take her away. He could reason with her when he got her out of the place.

"You were right, Clem," Ann said. Her voice was clear, unfrightened, pitched low. It sounded very sweet and very sad. "The building lives. It loves life, all the things you and I love . . . loved. It wanted . . . me, Clem. You were in the way."

"Hold on, honey I'll be with you in a minute," Clem whispered fiercely.

Ann's voice receded as he advanced. She pleaded with him to turn back. He reached the landing, found the next flight and continued up. Another flight, and another. His torch grew weaker. He could barely see the treaders under his feet. A penetrating chill

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came out of the unseen walls smote through his topcoat, made his flesh cold.

"There is nothing you can do now, Clem," Ann said, reasoning with him. "Go while you can. And remember I loved you, Clem; but this is bigger than either of us. I understand only a little . . . you never would understand."

Clem set his teeth and continued doggedly to trail the voice. Ann's words grew faint, and he came to a door. The door was at the head of the stairs. He groped for the knob as the batteries of his flash failed, aware that he had climbed six flights and the door before him gave upon the roof. When his light went out, complete and utter blackness leaped upon him. He tugged at the door.

He met the bitter kiss of the wind, the stinging deluge of snow and flying ice particles. The storm smothered him, filled his eyes and mouth and nostrils. Upon the open roof, the wind whipped with gale-like fury. He staggered upon the treacherous footing. Faintly he heard Ann's thin entreaty.

"Go back, go back, Clem!"

He plunged in the direction of Ann's voice, advanced twenty yards and came to an obstruction, a wall. The voice came from above now.

Clem was beyond power to reason. His mind was possessed by an *idee fixe*. He *must find Ann and take her away from here*. Out of breath from the six-story climb, he panted harshly. The wind whipped and beat at him, hurled blinding snow into his face. He stumbled over something that lay flat on the roof. He stooped, discovered a ladder. Grunting his triumph, he heaved it against the obstruction that blocked his advance. He started up the icy rungs.

Ann was crying now. He could detect the tears in her voice.

"Go back, Clem. Please go back!"

He stopped, flung his head back, and yelled into the storm.

"I'm taking you back with me, Ann!"

"Clem!"

HIS groping hands went past the top rung of the ladder, found a slanting surface, rounded, slated, slippery with a coating of ice. It was the roof of the angle-tower at the corner of the Heathcliff building. He paused while this knowledge percolated into his numbed brain.

But Ann was up there. She was up there somewhere, on the tower. He could hear her crying. It wasn't right for Ann to cry. Ann was too lovely ever to cry or be unhappy. He would have to reason with her. Make her understand it was just a silly notion she had that the building was haunting her. . . .

"Clem." Ann's voice was very close, plain in spite of the howling wind. "Clem, I told you the . . . the building wanted me. It . . . it heard us, Clem, planning to get married. It was jealous, and took me away. Go back now, while you can. You can't have me, not ever. I'm already married, Clem. . . . *I'm married to the building!*"

Clem flung himself toward Ann's voice, reaching out and clawing with both hands, as if he might thus seize her. He did not seize Ann. He did not seize anything. There was no purchase, not anywhere. There was only steeply slanting tile, covered thickly with ice, and the snow swirled around.

The shriek of the wind grew louder in his ears, and the thought occurred to him that he was falling. But it was too dark to see the grimed, opaque windows hurtling upward past him. With his last thought, he wondered if Ann would be unhappy without him. . . .

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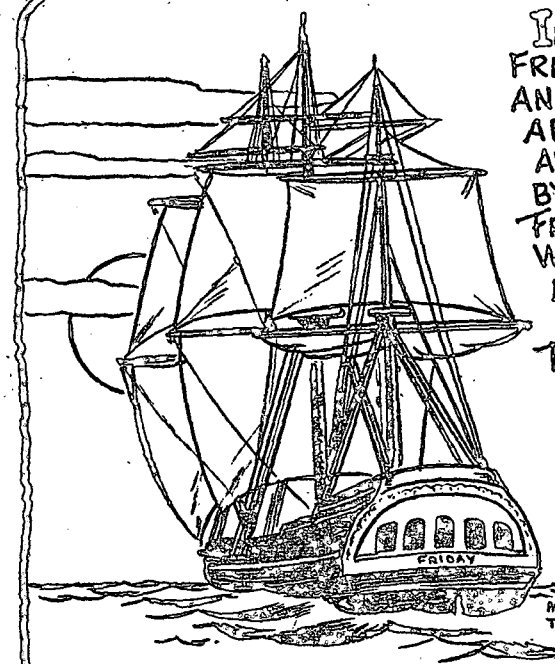
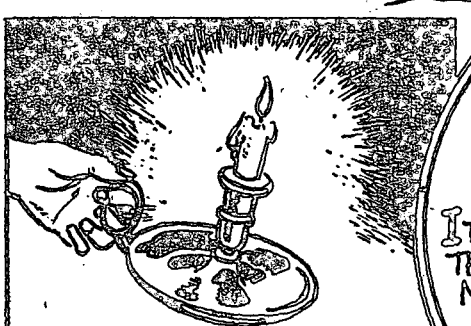
Superstitions and Taboos
By Weill



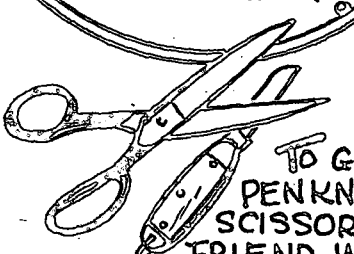
IN ENGLAND A CENTURY AGO FRIDAY WAS CONSIDERED SUCH AN UNLUCKY DAY THAT THE ADMIRALTY DECIDED TO DO AWAY WITH THE SUPERSTITION BY BUILDING A "FRIDAY" SHIP. FRIDAY WAS THE DAY HER KEEL WAS LAID, THE DAY SHE WAS LAUNCHED AND THE DAY SHE WAS COMPLETED. FRIDAY WAS HER NAME AND EVEN THE NAME OF HER CAPTAIN. FRIDAY WAS THE DAY SHE SET SAIL ON HER MAIDEN VOYAGE. *AND SHE WAS NEVER HEARD FROM AGAIN*

MEE MORNINGSIDE
TRUE MAG.



LIGHTING A CANDLE AT THE BIRTH OF A CHILD WAS BELIEVED NECESSARY TO KEEP OFF EVIL SPIRITS. AT MARRIAGE IT WAS THOUGHT TO PREVENT THE EVIL EYE FROM AFFECTING THE HAPPY PAIR, AND AT DEATH IT WAS BELIEVED TO DRIVE AWAY THE DEMONS WHO WERE ALWAYS ON THE LOOK-OUT FOR THE SOULS OF DYING MEN.

IT IS BELIEVED THAT SCRAPINGS OF FINGER-NAILS PUT INTO WHISKEY AND GIVEN TO A DRUNKARD TO DRINK *WILL CURE HIM OF HIS INEBRIETY.*



TO GIVE A PENKNIFE OR SCISSORS TO A FRIEND WITHOUT SOME SORT OF PAYMENT, IS THOUGHT EXTREMELY UNLUCKY.

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The Polar Vortex

By MALCOLM FERGUSON

A curiously terrible experiment of blasphemous implications!

AMONG the effects of the late Leopold Lemming, multi-millionaire turned scientist and dabbler, was a small, battered old chest containing several hundred yards of wire on which had been recorded sounds, and a two-hundred-page transcript of an experiment. Lemming had made his money in real estate, which is quite another thing from science, and in spite of his considerably advantageous investments

Heading by LEE BROWN COYE

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in new scientific inventions, most people thought of Lemming as a shrewd businessman and only a dabbler in the sciences, or, as they put it, the pseudo-sciences.

This opinion continued throughout the estate's auction at the appearance of such fantastic objects as rune-hilted swords, waxen images of notables, volumes of Paracelsus, the *Book of the Dead,* and Cotton Mather, all copiously annotated in a cryptic shorthand, with now and then a vehement objection bursting into English as he disagreed with one or another of these. There were quite a number of these objects, some common, some very esoteric indeed, but all apparently appraised as to their validity. Then there were volumes on the sciences—astronomy, mathematics, physics, predominantly, all bearing this code of the modern Pepys, whose choice of objects was so strange.

The most curious acquisition made from Lemming's effects, however, was the battered old chest, which contained the manuscript in English, the dictaphone wire, and a small sheaf of notes, which turned out to be the case-book of an experiment Lemming had made in connection with his observatory at the South Pole. These effects gave evidence of a shocking ruthlessness, blindly idolatrous to the acquisition of scientific knowledge, revealing a curiously terrible experiment, which could be pieced together from the notebook Lemming used and the wire-reel—

THE CASE-BOOK OF DANIEL IMBRIFER

1 Feb.: I am opening this notebook with high hopes. I think Daniel Imbrifer will be an excellent subject. Clerk by day, student by night, he strives with the valor of Prometheus. He'll do.

And now, two years to the day since I laid the cornerstone of the glass-domed observatory at the South Magnetic Pole, I've met him in a bookstore, vastly hungering for knowledge and forasmuch as he could not buy both books and food. Just under six foot tall, raven-haired: that he was a fathomer of dark pools was reflected in his eyes. I hope to plumb the depths of those pools and stir them into a mad wrath that spews up the long-hidden debris of their deepest abysms. I want to whip up such a tidal frenzy in his mind that all surface craft will be lost, and derelict thoughts be riven from their mud-moored deeps.

BUT not a bit of this eagerness could be seen in my casual introduction as we both groped for the same book. In a moment he knew me from various news photos and articles. We talked, I feigning interest in several odd volumes, he unfolding forthright views on science and myth alike under my discreet probings, proving with every word to be the man I wanted for my experiment. A noble mind, full of youthful energy, impatient to storm the gates of wisdom.

17 Mar.: Imbrifer and I sat late in my library, and over the third highball I showed him the model of my Antarctic planetarium. I had mentioned it often—now I was ready. I explained to him that there was to be a council of scientists there, and cunningly interwove names known to him and names known only to my mind. I spoke with regret of my unsuccessful attempts to get someone who could represent the layman, since all these men had pursued their theories so long that they were blind to all others. A good pupil demands clear expression from his teacher, and often finds the weak places in an exposition I argued. With such a student we could inaugurate a series of round-table discussions, of seminars, of papers and paper-chases.

How could he be anything but impressed by this, and by the model of the sheer-glass, double-thick hemisphere in the deserted waste of the Antarctic, whose winter is a perpetual night. I dissembled the model and showed him the subterrene dynamo, the storage passageways, enough devices to insure the safety of a dozen men for a year at least.

I showed him the telescope alongside the observatory, which, even in the model, could be raised cunningly from its garage just as coastal guns are brought into place. And Imbrifer saw that the telescope could fathom the skies, recording on the deep screen before him what it probed, as if on an oversized television screen. It's a delicate machine, yet especially made to withstand cold—with the advantage that in the

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winter nights of the South Polar region there are a minimum of deflecting heat waves.

Imbrifer took it all in, and I've taken him in—he's hooked. I have yet to get him to take the custodianship of the place until the "conference" starts. Say a month from the time we leave him there, flying away; his eye fixed as a cyclops' on the sky. I have yet to explain to him the apparatus for projecting an artificial skyscrape in cloudy weather. Perhaps I'll leave that until he gets there.

Ah, but he's a prober—all concerned for the science of the thing; lured to look at the fascinating, and away from my magic-making skullduggery. Teasing his mind to reveal its secrets, catching himself in superstitions and intimations of mortality, and then perplexing himself with "Why?". Anon playing cat and mouse with a whim, letting it go and catching it again.

29 Mar.: It is agreed. Daniel Imbrifer will fly with me on the 14th of next month. I promised him the crop's cream of scientists, and so regaled him. He's to represent Everyman, or his equivalent in the Enquiring Man of Today, at this intellectual Olympiad. While most of this is secret, I have had his picture taken as "assisting me in research" and it's appearing in newspapers here and there. For one month, I told him yesterday, he is to be the sole caretaker at the polar observatory, relieving the four men now on duty there. He is to study the earth and the heavens, the vast deeps of space, and the tiny realm of man. I explained that as one goes to a foreign country to learn its language, here was his opportunity to study astronomy, to contemplate, with all the resources of modern science the stars and the space between the stars. But little does he realize, storming the gates of wisdom, that this may be too much; that like no other man on earth this world will be too little with him.

OF COURSE I've shown him that physically he will be quite safe. Physically, yes, as snug as a bug in a rug—auxiliary heating equipment, an emergency dynamo, and an oil-heating system if these should fail. A veritable anthill of tunnels stocked with more food than such a student as he was used to, rayed out, dry, cool, and air-conditioned, into the ice and frozen earth below.

14 Apr.: At the South Pole. The giant plane landed on the rough ice outside, taxiing to within 100 yards of the polished dome, which had kept its perfect sheen under the combined protection of an oil which prevents blown ice-particles from forming and piling up, an invisibly fine-veined de-icing system raying throughout the sheer glass dome, and a judicious placing of the observatory at the bottom of a shallow bowl which is perpetually scooped by the winds themselves, yet is shallow enough to give the observatory an excellent horizon.

The four caretakers, on shift for a month, greeted us enthusiastically. I have to keep them as much out of Imbrifer's way as I can, and exert all care that they pack their books and cards and magazines and games with which they passed the time and beat boredom back. I hit on the scheme of opposing such "vain frivolities" for my student-friend with a sanctimonious air that was quite out of my character.

15 Apr.: At the South Pole—or, to be technical, at the hypothetical magnetic South Pole, diametrically antipodal to the magnetic North Pole. Today I leave Daniel Imbrifer to his studies, to burn the midnight oil in the uninterrupted Antarctic night. And with problems as ponderable as the night is long.

He and I checked the observatory's apparatus—its temperature kept evenly at a chilly 58.6 degrees Fahrenheit, its air-conditioning functioning perfectly, preventing heat-waves from piling up under the dome, but creating a steady, fountain-shaped current of air, and keeping sight of the stars undistorted. And below us purred this giant dynamo with a low, even pulsing which was barely perceptible.

The lighting in the dome has been cut down to three shielded stroboscopic lights. One casts a wan light over a study table; another at the head of the bed on a gooseneck to swing over the low bookshelf; the third by the apparatus for raising the telescope. This was the extent of the furniture under the dome, and the smooth, heavy, steel floor has only the trap-door leading to the underground plant, in the center.

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Around this is a steel ring, flush with the floor, which will reveal its purpose to Imbrifer in a short while. I checked its mechanism, as delicate as a watch, and found that when heavy clouds obscure the heavens the electric eye will release a jetty vapor to fill the empty air-space between the inner and outer layer of glass in the dome. The ring in the floor will become a band of light, projecting on the dome's vapid black an exact replica of the heavens as they would have appeared as the earth turns. And just as readily the cunning show gives way to the real one. Perhaps this device will ignite the powder train which will set fire to Imbrifer's brain, until he feels a tottery Atlas indeed.

This device I set in motion, and yet one more.

The dictaphone, whose wires will start with every sound and stop with every silence, catching every stirring above the pounding of the pulses in the brain's turbine. So.

(Extracts from the Diary of Daniel Imbrifer.):

16 Apr.: At 1350 hours by my watch, Mr. Lemming and his four caretakers left, having instructed me thoroughly regarding the equipment I will need to use here. It is strange that there is no communication with the rest of the world, or any reception of news of any kind. I objected strongly when he started to take the radio out, but he flew into such a rage that I finally let him have his way.

He has an outline study program prepared, with questions for me to ponder. Insolvable questions categorically stated—about dwarf stars, variable stars, comets, nebulae, gravitational pulls, orbits, the origin of the Milky Way and its present direction of movement.

The bookcase contains a dozen books on astronomy, celestial navigation, and mathematics, plus a strange typescript volume containing a collection of folk-lore and mythology concerning man's contemplation of the heavens. Selections from Pliny, Max Mueller, Sigmund Freud, Sir James Frazer, Oswald Spengler, Dean Swift, Fiona MacLeod, Andrew Lang, Novalis, and the literature of ancient Egypt and Arabia, all showing man's perplexed fascination with the night sky.

BUT all my scrambling around is but the reflection of my loneliness. For immediately as the green Castor and red Pollux on the plane's wings grew dim against the less-colorful stars, loneliness rushed to my heart and took possession of my marrow. This tiny toadstool at the earth's Ultima Thule was to be my place of vigil. Well, I must stick it out now. If all goes well I can afford to try a few experiments of my own after all this.

18 Apr.: The sky being brilliant, I summoned the sentinel telescope and swept the heavens, the stars crystal clear in the Antarctic cold. Those of higher magnitude delineated as suspended in space. But what caught my eye as I followed the majestic sweep of the Milky Way across the sky was a void, an empty well in the sky—a sudden break in the spate of stars. This hole or blind spot is remarkably situated to catch the eye, being near the zenith, in the lower left quadrant of the Southern Cross. Find the Southern Cross—the cynosure of all navigators below the equator, and this void gapes before you. It is the Coalsack, gaping utterly devoid of stars from this hemisphere's most conspicuous spot.

20 Apr.: My calendar and my watch tell me it is the 20th of April, but my irregular hours will soon trample down the barriers between the days, since there's no daylight and dark to distinguish them. I find myself pacing the even surface of the steel floor. I linger over my meals, but the whole eating process can't be protracted over three-quarters of an hour, somehow.

I now know what the dour Scotch caretaker meant when he got wind of the fact that I was to spend a month here, alone. "It shouldn' be, mon. A young lad like ye. It's nae guid for ye to be withouten a roof. Ye canna keep yer skull's cap on withouten a roof. 'Tis agin Nature and God."

And with that he took two quarts of whiskey and with finger to lips he hid them in amongst the canned food. A little later he was about to give me a pack of cards but Mr. Lemming interfered.

Mr. Lemming is a strange figure. Com-

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monplace enough in appearance, yet how he tramples beauty and life under foot in his search for truth. Doesn't he realize that truth should be cut in chunks man can swallow? That science, unless devoted to the orientation of mankind to this world, rather than to the bedevilment of mankind for your own satisfaction and perhaps even knowledge, is a perversion. Mr. Lemming's damn-the-cost attitude is too big for this world.

I thought today that I'd at last be able to turn my thoughts to earth, at least for long enough to get my breath. But I didn't count on the genius of Mr. Lemming, who produced an image of the heavens on the dome of the observatory. It's a clever thing, throwing every detail visible to the naked eye upon the glass dome. . . . I suppose he'd explain it as "for the guidance of the council" but I see it as an effort to sever my mental associations with the man-sized world and draw me out into the realms of space.

How little I realized when I came here. Is it really my imagination, or is Mr. Lemming trying to condition my thoughts? How? Why?

I REMEMBER a puppet-show in which a man suddenly appeared as a fearsome giant, after I had become used to the deft, graciously proportioned Lilliputians. Thus our premises of thought are altered, yet we are always human beings, not titans, nor want to be.

22 Apr.: I could not bring myself to write anything yesterday. I studied and made notes on the Southern constellations, examining the double stars all wound up in each other's fate, the dwarf stars looking what their name implies under the terrific weight of their bodies. I could not help but imagine attributes for the various stars, a childish trick firmly rooted in the mind of man.

23 Apr.: I'm still studying books on this world and this universe. I remember of a man studying the phenomenon of sleep for so long and so deeply that he inhibited himself from going to sleep—he "murdered sleep," and had to seek rest in a sanitarium.

24 Apr.: After writing the words above I went to sleep readily enough, but awoke in sudden fright, somehow startled, perhaps by a cramped position. The first thing I saw was that baleful emptiness, the Coalsack, yawning like an ape's gape in the night. Dark in a world of dark.

25 Apr.: Tired. I had better not write. Brain fag. Sorry, Imbrifer, old boy, but the first person is not well.

26 Apr.: Today I took one of the books and went downstairs, but the lighting is bad. I could feel the stars above me if I could not see them. It was worse, as if the fourth dimension were lurking to swallow me into thin air. I had better stand and fight like a man. If I'm going to fear anything I want to find it out before it finds me out.

(Apparently at this point the noises transcribed on the wire do not reflect alarming aberations. An inordinate amount of pacing back and forth restlessly, a good deal of talking to himself, though nothing as fascinating or understandable as the diary. Very little laughter except for a sardonic chuckle. At one point Imbrifer took to running around the observatory, but whether from nervousness or from a planned project to exercise, cannot be known.)

27 Apr.: Poking around in the below-surface regions trying to consume as much time as possible making dinner, yet at the same time subconsciously speeding up, teasing myself with my bodings, when I found a covered disk in the center of the floor inset in front of the hatch-ladder. I unscrewed the two screws that kept the cover in place and found a mariner's compass. I tripped the release on the compass, setting it in motion. The release somehow broke in doing so, but I soon overlooked this as I watched the strange action of the compass. It fluctuated, wobbled, and spun for a moment, and finally settled down to spin slowly but steadily. Deliberately and determinedly it set about to register All Points North. Around and round and round.

I suppose it sounds natural, but it was a possibility I had never anticipated. Ap-

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parently set in the center of the building's foundation, it won't budge. It's the only compass here, too. Is this the reaction a compass should make when located as this one is? The earth's axis seems very real to me, as if it ran directly through the center of this building. I wonder if a plumb, suspended free, would swing round instead of back and forth. I wish there were enough space to try it.

I'VE been sitting here musing for three hours now. Here is empirical evidence that I am the Man in the Mulberry Bush, and all men grope around me. . . .

(Here is interpolated the first of the recordings from the wire, following a mad crescendo of laughter.)

". . . Laugh, damn you, laugh. It will steady your nerves. Now let me think this thing through. Here am I at the imaginary point around which this giant gyroscope whirls. This small compass is cogged to whirl about the same central point as does the earth, but, though concentric, it whirls faster, being somehow the center of a smaller circle. Only at this orbit is the spin registered, since everywhere else it's off-line. Even a mile off the distance absorbs the whirl, though the compass begins to act queerly. The laws of gravitation offset all centrifugal force. Well, they do here for that matter, but there's still all that extra 'whirl' left. No, it can't be. . . .

"Where is that whiskey the Scotchman left. Here if I can reach it. . . . I seem to be walking all right on this dizzying disk. If only that damned compass would stop acting like a weather-cock in the center of a cyclone. Ah, here it is. . . .

" 'Tell me why the stars do shine . . .' Say that's good; it's a long time since I sang that in church.

'Tell me why the stars do shine
Tell me why the ivy twines
Tell me why the sky's so blue . . .'

How about that ivy business? That's strange. North of the equator it spins counter-clockwise, just like a cyclone. South of the equator the vine twines clockwise, just like the cyclone. At the equator the effect is most dissipated. No crises there. But at the center of this little 'o', this orb, it spirals to beat hell. And that, as Kipling would say, if he had been drinking, is why we have no ivy at the poles. It's also why you don't see streamers around the South Pole come Mayday. . . ."

28 Apr.: I awoke lying across my bed, feeling rotten, fully dressed. I am not a drinking man, and feel down at the edges. But perhaps it's a good thing. This place is getting me down—and I don't mean because it's down under here, either—that's a lot of imaginary nonsense. It is, truly enough one of the poles, though, and like only one other point in the world, its antipode, its nadir, its opposite.

I feel better now. Perhaps I can study again.

29 Apr.: Today I contemplated the space between the stars, looking first at our nearest neighbor, Alpha Centaurus, and then I found (with difficulty) the external galaxy in, or rather behind, the constellation of Centaurus. This is another Milky Way—this wee haze amounts to somewhere near as much as most of the rest of our horizon's view for size. From Alpha Centaurus light is supposed to take four years and four months dragging its heels at its usual speed in a vacuum getting around to us.

2 May: My precarious equilibrium has been maintained, largely by not asking myself too many questions and by "not thinking about anything." As I spun the telescope away from a variable star I was watching, stars of the Milky Way swam across my field of vision as so many motes. Many of them are larger than our sun and several thousand light years away. And then the bottom dropped out, as it were, as if this were too much for this mechanical contraption. It registered nothing. Nothing. A blank black. I looked up. Yes, the stars still shone. But the telescope's field was a blank. Fearfully and with moist palms I turned the dial. A star appeared at the lower right corner. I spun the dial away, up and to the left. Another star appeared. Then the troupe of the Milky Way, as if the celestial ballet had started afresh. I'm afraid I whimpered at this, and fell all a-tremble, like a puppy. I had accidentally stumbled on the Coalsack, and it had taken me unawares.

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There is something about that celestial blind-spot that makes me want to cower in a corner, but this damned place is round.

3 May: My watch stopped when I slept. I can tell time roughly by the stars, but I might easily become confused and lose track of the days. Then I'd be afraid to reckon up for fear I'd lose a day, or a week, and have it here ahead of me. I wonder if my pulse stopped or whether it was some baleful influence here. Last night a terrible dream wrought me. A vine twined quickly out of space and seized my head. I awoke, screaming. And right above me was the lurking pit out of which the spiral spun. It seemed ages that I cowered in bed, cursing my cowardice, afraid of reality, afraid of dream.

4 May (I guess): Relief! Relief, damn Lemming! Something he hadn't thought of. A straw for me to clutch at as I whirl in the center of this polar maelstrom.

AN EARTHLY phenomenon. One he hadn't anticipated either. He who ruled out snow and the rushing balm of a frozen death from his little study of this poor student, Daniel Imbrifer. He who created the glassy image of the heavens to taunt me; who exposed me to the gaze of the deeps, to the hypnotic pull of this vastness of space, drawing me out as oil on water, in an element equally foreign and fearsome.

The phenomenon sheds more light rather than less, the Aurora Australis. This earthly phenomenon has helped me get my feet under myself at least for long enough to learn that my mind is that of a poor earthling and should not seek to soar too far. In this assurance I have won for, though I lose my mind, I have really gained it.

Life surges back and the pulses pace for a moment more sedately. At first the Aurora Australis marched slowly in crackling white radiance, as if the atmosphere were raining manna; then in colored energy, dancing from horizon to horizon, taking in its bounds at a Borzoi leap. Lord, once again to be an awestruck earthling and watch the hound of heaven, the leaping Loki, the frozen lightning, the shattered rainbow, energy snared and transformed by witchery, a hyperborean Ariel, an impersonalized nervousness which drives out my own. My pen flows evenly, swiftly, as this phenomenon continues, because when it dies down my energy will begin to charge and leap up.

Later: The Aurora Australis has gone, but my mind is still in the ways of men. Though alone on the night-side of the world, I know the rest is there; that the sun greets most men the world around. That work and days go on I know, that men work at the vast drop forges, at the antiquated plows; that they ogle the women and test their strength with other men at games; that they are often cruel, but that there will always and ultimately be beauty and a warming of the heart; and though many are killed, some will see light and humility.

Later: Perhaps I can last out the month, though I doubt it. I'm afraid to compute the time and date by celestial means. I'm afraid that time has stood still or perhaps has crept at snail's pace, as if the snail had started at the back of my skull-bone and had not yet lumped up under my hair at the top of my head—but such thoughts spin into the abysms of madness. And yet even unafflicted people use mad concepts, though they no more realize than they do the fact the earth is spinning and time speeding with it, though they see that the sun rises and sets, while I do not.

This "morning" I awoke quietly, and kept a blanket over my head until I had my wits about me. Then boldly looked out at the skies sinking into infinity, suspended in infinity. I think I can stand it today, though. I tried to make a deck of cards, but fearing I would become superstitious as luck played tricks with me. I would have embodied luck as an unseen presence behind me, fearfully pointing a skeletal hand at a card. And there is enough behind me that I have to keep driving back mentally. Sometimes obsession rides my back like a twining corpse.

I *WILL* choose my thoughts carefully today (today being determined as the period until I grow sufficiently tired to seek rest). I cast about me for something to do, to keep me occupied. In this calm moment

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I see that it is quite probable that Lemming did, wholly by design, plan to use me as his guinea pig. Since one man has willed that this be so, and since I cannot alter it, I will let this record continue as long as it will to express this emotional dispersement and end either when I'm rescued or as it will.

(From the wire dictaphone.)

"I am alone on earth.

"Once there were Adam and Eve and Pinch Me. Adam and Eve have gone off and left me here all alone. I make the world go round on course, on time. But what if I should fall asleep and it should stop, and the rest of the universe be spinning except the world?

"There's a good boy—crank the spit. If I could only really tell why I turn this world around. . . .

"It's all in your imagination, Danny—it's all in your imagination. Damn that blasphemous compass. I'll break it, that's what I'll do. I'll get something heavy and drop it on it. This chair will do. . . .

"There, that's better. But oh, it gapes like an empty socket! What have I done?"

(Now the diary again.)

Later: Yesterday I broke the compass. But I solved nothing by that. It still goes around in my mind. I was childish and I am just aggravating myself. I am sorry. It would be better if I left it undamaged. Then I could see that things are as they are and get a foothold on facts that are fast eluding me.

(The wire record again.)

"Eieeaaah . . ., stop, world. Stop whirling. That ape's hairy black arm grasping the world from that ebon emptiness of the Coalsack turned inside out. Stop spinning me swivelling. Too fast. The world grasped as seaweed clenches a clam—but whirling as the ape's arm spins it, unkinking. No, no, grasping hand, pressing palm! Sweat pearled.

"It's me you want—wait—I'll stand at the nub's hub. I'll howl it down. Eiii-ah. . . ."

NOTES OF MR. LEOPOLD LEMMING

The body of Daniel Imbrifer was found at the foot of his bed, his feet tangled in bedclothes, his skull broken on the steel floor. He had apparently set out to stand astride this mad world. I wonder—

Fortunately I entered first, well expecting such a discovery. The crew of the ship is quite different from the one which took me away two and a half months ago. Both crews believe I left Imbrifer for only a week (though he anticipated a month's stay only), and no one knows the devices I have here—not all of them, or why. Now before they come in I will gather and put aside all the data on Imbrifer.

Here comes the pilot. I'll be shocked at my discovery. Within twenty-four hours we should leave here.

SPAWN OF THE GREEN ABYSS

A long novelette of eerie terror by

C. Hall Thompson

Also

Allison V. Harding

Seabury Quinn

and other favorites

November WEIRD TALES on sale September 1st

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Threshold of Endurance

BY BETSY EMMONS

THIS morning she struggled awake slowly, with the feeling that her dreams had been unpleasant, though she could not remember what they were.

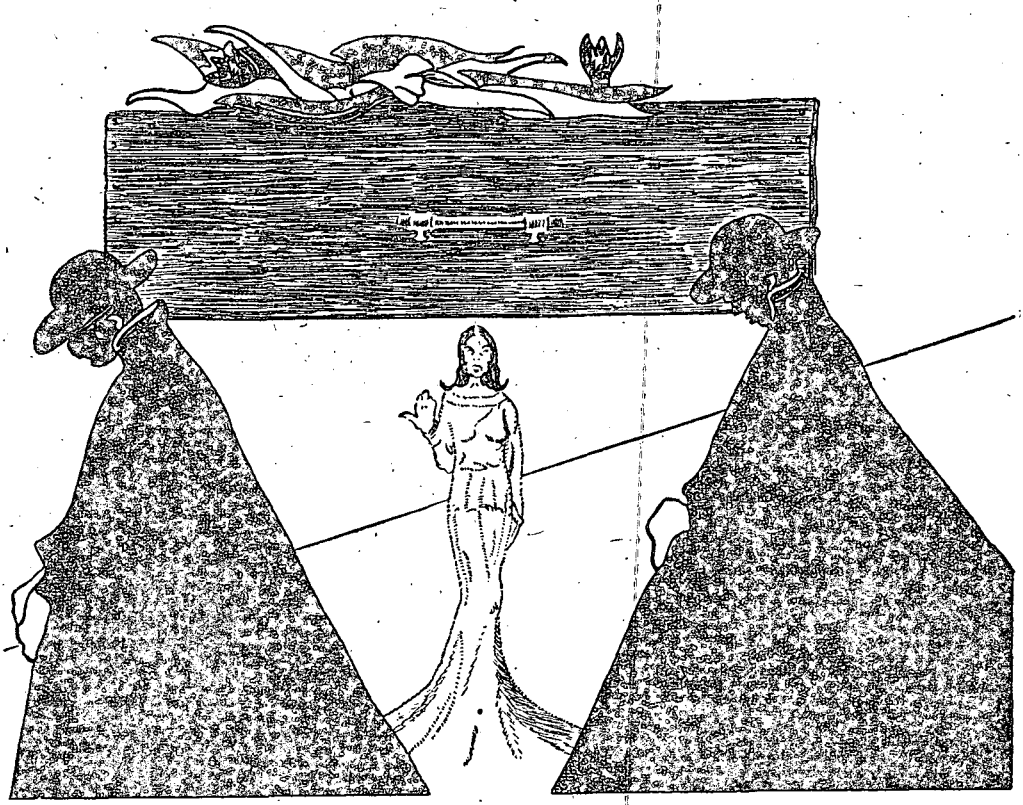
She looked at the clock, raised herself on her elbow, and called sharply "Time to get up!" But her husband's rumpled bed was empty.

She went to the head of the stairs and called him in a voice that sounded hollow in the quiet house. There was no reply. He must have wakened early, dressed, and gone to the office. She felt annoyed, as she was always annoyed at a break in the routine she had established for her husband and herself.

Now she set to work. It was impossible for her to leave a room until she had tidied it, though she felt unlike herself this morning. Her movements seemed to have the strange lightness of fever, and she could not shake off the oppression of the forgotten dream.

First she made her husband's bed, for the sight of an unmade bed was not endurable, and there was something particularly unpleasant about an unmade bed where her husband had been sleeping. Next she went to his closet, conscientiously overcoming the

"One who has Long Endur'd may of a sudden break the Bounds of Reason."



Heading by A. R. TILBURNE

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repulsion she always felt at the faint male smell which somehow could not be banished, though he no longer smoked tobacco even at the office. His pajamas were on the floor, not placed neatly on a hook as she had taught him.

A book lay on the night-table beside his bed, one of the odd old things he liked to read. It opened at a bookmarked page, where an underscored paragraph caught her eye. "There is a Threshold of Endurance with the Soul as well as with the Body, and one who has Long Endur'd may of a sudden break the Bounds of Reason, hurling himself 'gainst the oppressor with a Vigor the greater for his Long Control."

She removed the bookmark. Her husband, she decided, ought to stop reading at night. She took the book with her when she went downstairs, wondering as she descended why the house seemed queer this morning. She was not an imaginative or nervous woman. Surely she must be sick.

Downstairs the living-room was cool and orderly, with the window shades drawn as she left them the evening before. She raised each shade and went into the kitchen. On the sink stood an empty glass filmed with milk and a plate with sandwich-crumbs. Her husband had come downstairs last night to find something to eat and had left his dishes unwashed. There was nothing she disliked so much as dirty dishes. She washed and dried them before she made her coffee.

She was drinking the coffee when the back doorbell rang. Looking through the kitchen window, she saw an old tramp.

"I'm sorry," she called, "but I have nothing for you." He stood as if he had not heard, and she impatiently turned away. She washed her breakfast dishes, brought the morning paper in from the front porch, and was dusting the living-room when she heard a noise in the kitchen. She went to see. The kitchen window was open and the old tramp was rummaging in the icebox. "I am going to call the police," she said.

He did not seem to hear. As if unaware of her presence, he closed the icebox, tucked the stolen food under his arm, unlatched the back door, and walked out. She watched with helpless anger, for he had not even seemed frightened. She moved to the telephone to call the police, then stopped, putting a hand to her forehead as memory nagged vaguely.

LAST night at midnight she had awakened and heard her husband in the kitchen. She had put on her neat wrapper, gone downstairs, stood in the kitchen doorway, and said, "This is a bad habit. It is unnecessary and wasteful, and bad for your stomach." She had gone upstairs without waiting for his answer, and he had followed without washing his dishes. And then something else had happened. What was it? Or was she merely haunted by that dream?

Glancing toward the sink, she saw that his milk-filmed glass and plate with sandwich crumbs stood there unwashed, just as they had stood when she first came into the kitchen that morning. But she had washed them. Surely she had washed them. She frowned, not understanding, trying to remember what had happened after her husband followed her upstairs.

She went into the living-room. The shades were down, drawn for the night, as if she had never touched them. Through the window she saw the morning paper lying on the porch, exactly as it had lain there earlier.

But it was impossible. Frightened now, she ran upstairs to the bedroom. On the night-table, was the book her husband had been reading, with the bookmark still in place, though she knew she had taken the book downstairs. The words she had read thrummed in her brain: "One who has Long Endur'd may of a sudden break the Bounds of Reason, hurling himself 'gainst the oppressor. . . ."

Her husband's bed was unmade, exactly as it had been when she awoke. Everything was as it had been. And remembering suddenly what had happened when her husband followed her upstairs the night before, she understood why she felt strange and bodiless, why the house remained untouched by her hands. She looked toward her own bed for the first time that morning, knowing already what she would find there. Knowing that her own body, which would never again control the external world, lay sprawled and lifeless, with a red gash across its throat.

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Xerxes' Hut

BY HAROLD LAWLOR

THE highway winds now through the Golden Hills, over the spot where Xerxes' hut once stood. And the mysterious well beneath the hut, filled now with rubble these past thirty years, is buried and forgotten. And whatever bizarre properties the water of that well contained are lost, too, forever.

But I'll never forget the scene I saw there, nor the grisly denouement that followed. They'll linger in my memory forever—linked with that unfathomable couple, Xerxes and Appolonia Andreapolous.

The first time I ever saw Xerxes' hut was when I was about eight years old. In the summer of 1913, that would be. Dad and I were returning, late one July night, from one of those political backslapping tours about the county that his constituents expected of a man whom they'd elected. Dark lowering clouds had been rolling up from the northeast all that afternoon, and Dad was anxious to get home before the storm broke. But Blaze, the old mare who pulled our buggy, was a privileged character, and not inclined to be hurried.

Shortly after we wheeled onto the Onarga Turnpike, we knew we were never going to make it. So Dad stopped on the sandy hump-backed road and put up the storm curtains, making of the old buggy a frail shelter against the threatening elements.

He was none too soon. The wind from the northeast lashed itself into a greater fury, and the sky was shattered with yellow-green veins of lightning. The very earth itself shook in one grand climactical

Heading by BORIS DOLGOV

The highway was to run here—through property leased by forces beyond man's ken

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outburst of thunder as the rain came—wildly, as if angrily seeking to penetrate the isinglass windows of the flapping side-curtains.

Blaze laid her old ears back and lowered her head, and clop-clopped despondently ahead, rain streaming from her haunches, steam rising from her broad back. It was cozy in the lurching buggy, and Dad laughed in defiance of the storm.

"Not bad, eh, Danny?"

"It's swell!" I wouldn't have cared if we hadn't reached home for hours. But we had only several miles to go. I knew, because we were just rounding one of the Golden Hills, two hills that had received their name from the glory of forsythia that covered them every spring.

That was when we heard it.

There was a rough track leading from the Turnpike into the hollow at the base of the Golden Hills. Dad, whose head had been bent in a listening attitude for some time, stopped the buggy.

I strained to hear, too. And then I did hear. Fits and snatches of music torn by the storm. Someone off there to the right in the blackness was playing the piano. Eerie music, out of the night—a thing of broken chords and wailing minors that struck like small cold breezes at my spine. I can remember still how unbearably sad and lonely it sounded.

I slid over closer to Dad.

"It's Xerxes," he said. "I've heard him often when I was alone, passing here." One of the isinglass windows was torn, and Dad widened the opening until we could peer through. "He lives in a hut, there in the hollow, Danny. See?"

All I could see was faint flickering golden light, as of candles, half-obscured by the slanting rain. The hut itself I couldn't see at all. Only that pale glow.

"Does he live there all alone?" I asked.

Dad slapped the reins on Blaze's back, and we started up again. "Alone," he said, "except for a half-witted servant, Clyde. But when he first came here, he had his wife with him."

"Isn't she there any more?"

"No. He *said* she went away. But some people wonder if maybe—" Dad coughed, and broke off.

"Maybe she went back to where they used to live?" I said.

"Maybe," Dad agreed evasively. "Though, comes to that, nobody ever heard where they did come from."

Nor has anyone ever learned, to this day. But it seems not improbable that Xerxes and his wife had fled some long-ago terror, some menace in the Levant. For they were not nomadic by nature; they were people of substance. All anyone ever knew was that they had appeared suddenly some two or three years before I was born. They exchanged no neighborly visits—indeed, successfully discouraged them. So it remained forever a mystery why they had chosen to bury themselves in the decrepit hut cupped at the base of the Golden Hills.

After the disappearance of his wife, nine years before, Xerxes had grown more and more the recluse. He came no more to town; he sent Clyde, instead, from time to time, with carefully written instructions listing his needs. And it would have been futile, of course, to attempt pumping Clyde about his employer. Idiot Clyde of the odd-shaped skull, the great hulking man's body, and the meaningless giggle of a witless child.

Clyde, who must have known so much that he was never able to tell.

IT WASN'T until the following autumn that I had closer acquaintance with the lonely occupant of Xerxes' hut. But I hadn't forgotten, in the meantime. Nights during that summer I'd sometimes awaken at the lonely hoot of a passing distant train, and it would bring back vividly the memory of that stormy July night, the dim flickering light like a goblin eye in the blackness, the mournful elegy sobbing plaintively through the rain.

Now it was October. We went butternut-hunting that Saturday—Dutch Meier, Stubby O'Brien, and myself. And coming back, though we were already tired and hot and sweaty, we climbed the higher one of the Golden Hills to lay prone on the summit and peer down cautiously at Xerxes' hut. There was a lazy curl of smoke from its leaning brick chimney, and someone had been burning leaves in the clearing back of the hut for we could smell the smoke.

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But the hollow itself showed no sign of life.

"Careful, men!" whispered Stubby. "Don't let the enemy see you!"

We shivered delightedly. For by now we thought we knew who the "enemy" was. We'd been talking about it earlier. Xerxes was a murderer. He'd killed his wife. Dutch Meier had heard a neighbor talking to his mother about it. Of course, no one knew for sure; nothing had been proved. But we preferred to believe it was true; that here—romantically—we had a "real, live murderer," living just a few miles from town. It was scary to think of it. It was wonderful.

We stared down at the hut, enchanted. I think we almost expected to see a thin river of blood—"gore," we would have called it—flow suddenly from under the plank door of the cabin. So intent were we on our reconnaissance that we didn't hear a thing till a twig snapped frighteningly behind us. We leaped to our feet. There was nowhere to run even if our legs hadn't already gone suddenly limp as boiled spaghetti.

Clyde was standing there, watching us vacantly. In one hand he held a white envelope.

"Tee, hee, hee!" he giggled. "Tee, hee, hee!"

I don't know why it should have been so frightening, but it was. He must have been about eighteen years old at that time, and he towered over us. Dutch and Stubby were clay-colored under their tan, and I knew I must be, too. We'd never been so close to Clyde before, and he was alarming, to say the least. But when we had waited, and Clyde made no move to harm us, I found my voice.

"We weren't doing anything, honest!" I said. "We were just—just playing."

Clyde looked at us blankly. Then, "I want to play, too. Clydey wants to play, too!" He stuck out his lower lip.

I looked at Dutch and Stubby. We were embarrassed by Clydey's childishness. I wiped my forehead, and sought desperately for some answer to make. And then I saw the envelope in Clyde's hand.

"Gee, we'd like to play with you, Clydey," I said, "but look! You're going on an errand." I pointed to the envelope.

Clydey brought it up in front of his eyes wonderingly, as if he'd never seen it before. Then he brightened and smiled, showing his pointed white teeth, spaced far apart. "To the grocery store," he chanted happily, slapping his flank. "Like a galloping horse to the grocery store." He spat a little when he talked.

He turned away and started down the hill. We breathed a sigh of relief. But several yards away he stopped, and faced us again.

"The pretty lady," he said. We watched, fascinated, as great shiny tears started to roll down his cheeks. "Oh, the pretty lady, a-layin' in the water."

I swallowed. "What—what you mean, Clydey?"

He sniffled, then the tears stopped miraculously. He had forgotten. "Tee, hee, hee! Tee, hee, hee!"

He started off again, and this time he really did leave. We watched him all the way down the hill till he reached the Turnpike and headed north toward town, scuffling through the red and brown and golden fallen leaves with his strange, staggering gait.

"Boy, was I scairt!" Stubby said.

"Me, too." Dutch coughed. "I think I'm gonna be sick at my stummick."

He was.

WE SAT there until we felt better.

"Maybe that's how Xerxes done it," Stubby said. "What Clydey said. Maybe ole Xerxes drownded his wife."

We nodded solemnly.

"If we was detectives," Dutch said, "we could find out all about the foul deed. Boy, I bet we'd get a whoppin' reward, prolly."

"Go on, you'd be scared," I said.

"Scared, yourself!" Dutch said. "You're so brave, go down there and find out all about it. I dare ya! I double dare ya! You don't dast!"

"I would if I wanted to," I said, with dignity. "I just don't happen to want to, kind of."

"N'ya, n'ya! Danny's scared!" Dutch taunted.

Stubby took it up. "Scared, scared, scared!"

"You shut up, you guys!" I howled. I

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stood up recklessly. "All right, I will! I'll show you!"

I started down the side of the hill sloping into the hollow. Behind me there was a sudden, awed silence. I slid and skidded on the twigs and fallen leaves.

"You better stop tryin' to show off!" Stubby called in a hoarse whisper. "You better come back here!"

I couldn't have returned if I'd wanted to. I lost my balance and finished the last half of the journey on my corduroy-ed rear. Anyway, I didn't care. I'd show 'em who was a-scared of old Xerxes! At the bottom I stood up and brushed myself off as well as I could.

Xerxes' hut was there, a few yards before me. It was larger, seen close, than one would have supposed—fully twenty-four by thirty feet. It had never known paint, and its boards were weathered now to a silver-gray. A small window in the right end wall of the cabin had been replaced with a large one of the studio type, but this was evidently the only alteration that had ever been made in the place. And it was from this window, facing the Turnpike a quarter-mile away, that Dad and I must have seen the golden glow that rainy night last July.

I started for the plank door, my bravado beginning to ooze from me at every pore. But I knew Stubby and Dutch must be watching, and so I prodded myself forward. I went up onto the stoop, shadowed by a tangled vine from which the leaves had already fallen, and forced myself to knock. The tattoo I beat on the door was almost in rhythm with the knocking of my knees.

It opened startlingly soon. A shadow stood there against darker shadow. I couldn't see clearly. I think I must have been nearly blind with fright, anyway. But I stood my ground, though poised for flight.

"Please, mister, could I have a drink of water?"

"A drink? I don't see why not," a voice said. "Come in."

But I didn't really want to go in! I would have shrunk away. But it was too late. A hand, gentle enough, caught my arm and drew me inside.

THE voice hadn't sounded so very frightening. It wasn't harsh. It gave me courage to look up cautiously. I don't know what I'd expected. A monster, perhaps; a gnome-like little man, certainly. But Xerxes was neither of these. He was tall and well-built, though a bit on the slender side, and his thick black hair was turning shiny silver above his ears. He was handsome except for two deep grooves running from either side of his short straight nose to the corners of his mouth. The wrinkles of a man whose thoughts have been sad, bitter. He looked almost young, but he might have been any age.

He stood over me, smiling faintly, perhaps at my obvious terror. No doubt he knew of his reputation in the town. "Sit down," he said, "while I get you your drink. The pump's at the back."

I sat on the slippery seat of an elaborately carved chair, next the door by which I'd entered. Opposite me was the fireplace, and through a door alongside this leading to the well in back, Xerxes vanished.

I wasn't quite so frightened now. My eyes were growing accustomed to the dimmer light. I looked around.

I know now that it was a remarkable room for the shabby exterior of that shanty, but at the time I accepted it calmly enough. A Kirman rug, its colors gleaming like jewels against the ivory background, covered almost entirely the flat surface of the halved logs from which the floor was fashioned. Under the studio window, a great black concert grand sprawled its magnificent length, bearing five-branched silver candelabra at either side its music rack. And on the opposite wall—

I stared.

The painting hanging there must have been a good ten feet square, its size further augmented by the gilded baroque frame, a foot wide, that bordered it. I cast an apprehensive glance toward the door through which Xerxes had vanished, then slid off my slippery chair and trotted over for a closer view of the woman in the painting.

In all the years since then I've never seen a more beautiful woman. Sin was never blacker than her hair, drawn back sleekly from a central part into a great coil on her neck; slanting, secretive eyes; mouth like a

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scarlet bird. In the painting she was wearing a tight satin dress that fitted her opulent figure suavely, like thick black enamel. All this against the painted background of a bright red velvet curtain, darkened now with time and varnish to a deep maroon.

"She was very beautiful, was she not, my Appolonia? She died nine years ago."

I jumped. I hadn't heard him come up behind me. He handed me the brimming glass he held. He seemed to forget me.

"Pola!" he said softly, his eyes on the painting.

I knew nothing at that age of love. Nevertheless there was something in Xerxes' eyes that awed and disturbed me. I recognized even then that he must have loved this woman terribly.

I gulped the liquid in the glass thirstily, then set it down. Anywhere. I backed away, the eyes in the painting seeming to follow me. From somewhere came the sound of water dripping. It reminded me of what Clydey had said, and the fear that had vanished began to come back in waves.

I think Xerxes must have heard the water, too. For his head jerked up, and he turned to look at me.

"You must go!" he said harshly. "You must—"

The sound of dripping water came louder now.

He broke off, muttered an imprecation. Then swiftly he went to the piano, and his hands summoned forth great crashing chords that thundered and echoed in the room.

But he had been too late. I had heard. Heard the swift rush of waters from beneath the floor, as of a surging brook rapidly filling a pool.

AFTER minutes during which I stood there transfixed, the music crashing about my ears, the piano fell silent and Xerxes came to put his hands on my shoulders. There was no sound of a rushing torrent any longer.

"Did you hear anything?" he asked. Intently.

"Only the music, mister," I said, because that was what he wanted to hear, I knew. And I was afraid of the way his eyes were glittering as they watched me.

He smiled then, and pressed a coin into my shrinking hand. I knew he believed me, and I was relieved.

"That's right, son, you heard nothing. Good-bye. You must go now."

I was outside. The door closed behind me. But I didn't leave. Curious, I walked as quietly as I could around the hut to where the studio window was cut in the end wall. Xerxes had pulled down a great shade covering this, but I could peek in at the side where the sash was not quite completely covered.

He was lighting all the candles hastily. Then he went to throw back the Kirman rug, lift a trap door in the floor and leave it open, standing at an angle with the floor. He came then, and stood in the curve of the grand piano, his back toward me.

He was watching the opening in the floor, his lips parted. Breathlessly, I watched too. And then I saw it! A head was coming up slowly, slowly, as if the body to which it belonged was standing on an elevator below.

The eyes were closed, the long black hair dripping wet, shedding water as it came.

It was the woman of the painting.

My heart was pounding.

Slowly she emerged, clad in dripping clinging white, from that black well in the floor. Slowly her eyes opened. She smiled. She extended her hand to Xerxes, crystal drops of water falling like fringe from her outstretched arm.

Xerxes uttered a glad cry, started toward her.

And I was running then. Away. Away from that dreadful place, where the dead came to life. Running down the dirt lane to the Turnpike where Stubby and Dutch awaited me, sobbing as I ran. I fell once, scraping my knee, but I never felt it.

I didn't tell Stubby and Dutch what I'd seen.

I never told anybody.

I was afraid.

IT WAS the following summer that things came to a head, brought to a climax by the proposed new highway to be cut through the Golden Hills, replacing the old winding Onarga Turnpike.

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Because Xerxes' hut lay directly in the path of the new highway's route, the County Commissioners sent Dad out there to make a reasonable offer for the purchase of the property. And because Xerxes' holdings were small, and the hut itself of little or no value, no particular difficulty was anticipated.

But Xerxès flatly refused to sell.

There was an informal meeting of the exasperated commissioners in our dining room that night. I lay so quietly on the battered couch in the bay window, pretending to read a book, that Dad must have forgotten I was there. At any rate, he made no move to send me to bed where I belonged, and so I heard it all.

Oscar Newland, president of the county board, was the most vitriolic. This was nothing unusual, as he was known to grow apoplectic on the slightest provocation. He always gave the major Fourth of July speech in our town square, and we kids never missed it, expecting him to explode like a rocket.

"By Jupiter!" he was crying now. "The fellow shan't get away with it!" There followed a magnificent flow of oratory, with thunderous phrases about "obstructionists" and "standing in the path of progress" and "a town destined by Fate to become the most important in this glorious state!" the while I watched fascinated as his face purpled, and his fat jowls shook.

Dad waited till the outburst had run its course, and Mr. Newland had stopped for very lack of breath.

"I'm sorry," Dad said then. "I did my best to persuade him, but he didn't even attempt to argue with me. He just told me he didn't want to sell, and he had no more than that to say about it."

"We'll start condemnation proceedings at once!" cried Mr. Newland. And he even said resoundingly, "If we have to drag it through the highest courts in the land!" with a gesture, forefinger to the ceiling.

Dad said quietly, "Couldn't the new highway be routed another way?"

Mr. Newland recoiled as from a blow. "Are you intimating that Xerxes should be encouraged in his obstinacy?"

"I think it would be a great mistake to dispossess him."

Mr. Newland looked around at the others as if he thought his ears had deceived him. Then he turned to Dad. "May I ask why?"

"I—I can't say." There was a peculiar expression on Dad's face. "It's a feeling I have. A feeling of—oh, impending tragedy, perhaps, if we attempt to force him out."

"Tish-tosh!" snorted Mr. Newland. "Poppycock!"

I saw Dad's jaw set then in the ominous way it always did when he was sure he was right but had said his say.

A FEW mornings later, Mr. Newland made his "obstructionists in the path of progress" speech, with embellishments, at the Fourth of July celebration. By that time, the story had spread and everyone knew he was speaking of Xerxes Andreapolous.

Standing at one corner of the bunting-striped platform, I heard him through. Two heavy-set men behind me were nodding their heads sagely as Mr. Newland drove home every point, and I heard them muttering about "goddam foreigners who come here and think they can run the country."

I drifted away when the speech ended to ride on the merry-go-round and Ferris wheel of the cheap traveling carnival that had set up business at one end of the square.

It must have been two hours later that Dutch Meier came upon me there.

"Hey!" he said breathlessly. His face was red, and streaked with excited sweat. "Hey, I been lookin' all over for ya. I got somep'n to tell ya." He drew me behind one of the pitch-tents. "There's gonna be a raid! Tonight! They're gonna go out there and tear down ole Xerxes' hut!"

"Go on!" I scoffed. "Who?"

"Some men. Honest. I heard 'em talkin' over near the bandstand. They're all goin' together. Maybe they'll let us go, too."

I remembered Xerxes' sad eyes. "No. I wouldn't want to."

"*Why?*" Dutch was staring at me in amazement.

I only scuffed the ground with my copper-toed shoe, and muttered, "I—I don't know."

But I did know. It wasn't fair. So many men—sneaking up on just one, tearing down his house. It wasn't right.

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Dutch said helplessly, "Well, anyway. Come on over to the bandstand now, and listen."

But I shook my head. "No. I'm goin' home."

Dutch left me in disgust.

I didn't go home then, though. I trudged all the way out the sandy road, in the blazing July heat, and knocked on the door of Xerxes' hut.

"I don't know why I went, really. I didn't want to do it. I didn't want to be a snitcher. I just remember thinking over and over doggedly, "It ain't fair. I don't care. It ain't fair."

Xerxes was home, as usual. And when I'd told him disjointedly, embarrassedly, of the menace that threatened him, he looked sick. His eyes went from my flushed face to the Kirman rug. I knew what he must be thinking, but I gave no sign.

He said hopelessly, "Oh, my God." And he said, "I can't hold them *all* off. What is to become of—"

He stood there in silence for long minutes, thinking. Then his hand dropped to my shoulder gently. "Thanks, son. I don't know what—" His voice broke despairingly. "But, thanks. You'd better go now."

I remember standing outside a long time, looking at the silvery boards of the door he'd shut and locked behind me. My heart was heavy. I stood there until the piano started. Softly at first. Then loudly, angrily fortissimo. The fury mounted, mounted, mounted tearingly until I gasped. It held the grief, sorrow, despair of all the world. It couldn't be borne.

I turned. And fled blindly home as if all the fiends of hell pursued me.

I DIDN'T learn it till long afterward, but as it transpired, the mob didn't wait until nightfall before venturing to attack Xerxes' hut. Instead, flushed with heat and alcohol, they marched out there in a roaring body in mid-afternoon.

But they were too late.

For when they arrived, it was to find the door of Xerxes' hut swinging idly open, the clearing deserted, and no sign of life about the place.

Disconcerted, they stopped, and muttered among themselves. It was minutes before some of the bolder spirits among them nerved themselves to enter warily.

They found the body of Xerxes lying alongside the grand piano. And on the piano, where they had splattered, were the hair and the bits of gray and red matter that had been the brains of Xerxes Andreapolous. He'd blown off the back of his head by putting the muzzle of a shotgun in his mouth, and pulling the trigger with his toe.

The men, strangely sobered now, looked around. The Kirman rug was thrown back and the trap-door opened at an angle. One of the men, emboldened, went to the edge and looked down. The well was dry. And empty. But this occasioned no comment among them.

For none of them had ever seen what I had seen emerging from the well under Xerxes' hut.

IT WAS that afternoon, late, that Clydey came with his "gift" for me. How he escaped meeting the mob on his way, I'll never know. He must have come circuitously by back roads.

Dad was asleep on the couch in the dining room bay, a folded sheet of newspaper over his face to keep off flies. And I was out in the back yard, languidly shoving the lawn mower around. It helped me to forget about the trouble threatening Xerxes.

Clydey came in the rear gate while my back was turned, and he scared me badly. I didn't know he was there till his giggle made me jump.

"What do you want, Clydey?" I asked, watching him carefully. You always had the feeling you didn't know what he'd do next.

He looked at me vacantly, one finger exploring his nose. Then he brightened a little. "I brought you a present." He thought again, then repeated as if he'd learned it some time by rote. "Open your mouth, and shut your eyes."

I didn't open my mouth, but I shut my eyes and covered them with my hands to humor him. Minutes later I was going to peek, thinking he'd gone away and forgotten me, when I heard him giggle again. He

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brought my hands down, and I opened my eyes.

He stood there beaming at me. At first I couldn't see anything else, because he was standing in the way. And then I saw he had the handle of his coaster wagon in his hand. And I saw what was on the wagon.

I couldn't scream at first. I wanted to, but I couldn't.

She was lying half-in, half-out of the wagon, and she was totally unclad. Her head was bent back at an unnatural angle, and the ends of the long black hair were stained tan where they'd dragged through the dust of the sandy road. But I knew her.

The woman of the painting in Xerxes' hut. The woman of the dripping water. Appolonia Andreapolous.

"Tee, hee, hee!" Clydey giggled. "Oh, the pretty lady!"

The giggle started me off. I'd been standing terrified, mesmerized, up till then. But I started yelling at last. I was running screaming for the back door, my eyes threatening to burst from their sockets.

Dad met me, his face white at my howls. I couldn't speak. I could only point backward toward the yard. Dad ran out, and I saw him give one horrified look. Then he was dragging a sheet from the line, throwing it over that pathetic, inert body.

And Clydey watched him stupidly, obviously mystified at our incredible reaction to his "present."

I HAVE only the haziest memory of what happened afterward. I was sick, for one thing, and not far from hysteria. Dad put me to bed, and saw to it that I stayed there the next few days, under the care of our housekeeper.

But I remember Dad called Doc Nichols, who acted as coroner on the few occasions when one was needed in our quiet town. Doc came right over, wiping the sweat from his bald head. Two sudden deaths in one afternoon almost overwhelmed him.

I heard him telling Dad about Xerxes, and I shut my eyes. I'd been too late. I'd been no help, after all.

When Doc finished, Dad took him out to the back yard. From the bedroom window I hard him tell Doc grimly, "And this is Xerxes' wife. I know. I've seen the painting of her in his hut often enough."

Doc was dumbfounded. "Good God, but she was supposed to have disappeared nine, ten years ago!"

Dad said, "Evidently he'd held her a prisoner all these years. I can't see a mark on the body, but there can hardly be any doubt that he murdered her this afternoon, then killed himself."

This was too much for me. "He didn't, he didn't!" I hollered feebly from the window. "He loved her. He did!"

Dad looked up. "You keep still, Danny. You don't know anything about it."

I was too weak to argue. I tried, but Dad silenced me with a frown.

He told Doc. "I think Clyde must have come upon the murder and suicide, and for some strange reason of his own, he spirited the woman's body away. I've tried to question him, but it's useless. We'll never know his reason—or even what he saw."

The body of Appolonia Andreapolous was removed to the little room back of Doc's office that served as a morgue, and laid out there on a cot next the marble slab that held the sheet-covered body of her husband, Xerxes.

And I still hadn't told what I'd seen that morning last fall.

IT WAS the next morning that Doc Nichols telephoned Dad. I was still in the bedroom off the dining room, and heard Dad's end of the conversation.

"Yes? Oh, hello, Doc. Yes, yes . . . of course he must have killed her yesterday, just before he shot himself. Well, what else *can* we believe, for God's— What? All right, I'll be right over."

I wanted to tell Dad then what Xerxes had said, but he was gone, and didn't hear me calling from the bedroom. I could only wait till he returned.

But I was doomed to disappointment.

When Dad came back, he was looking white and shaken. He came into the bedroom when I called him and stood there alongside the bed, staring vacantly at nothing.

"Dad. Dad," I said. I had trouble getting his attention, but when he finally

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looked at me I went on. "Dad, Xerxes didn't kill her yesterday. He told me 'way last October that his wife had been dead nine years. And Dad, I saw——"

It was the only time I ever saw Dad really angry at me. And I know now most of that anger was composed, really, of fear. Fear of the unknown, of that which cannot be explained.

"Keep still, Danny!" he said sharply. "Listen. I forbid you ever to mention the subject of Xerxes and his wife to me again. Forbid you, do you understand?"

I stared at him, open-mouthed. I knew he meant it, all right. I was afraid to say anything else but "Yes, Dad."

I could only wonder in my heart.

AND so it was that the new Turnpike was built, and the apparently dry well under Xerxes' hut was filled with rubble, once the hut itself was torn down. But I sincerely believe the well was not always dry—that once, perhaps twice, a day it filled itself. And oh, I'd give the world to know what properties that water contained! What properties it held that could give back life to the unsentient dead. For that it held this power I truly believe.

It wasn't until long, long years later that Dad told me what he had seen in the room back of Doc Nichol's office.

Doc greeted him solemnly at the door, and led him into the back room. "This woman *couldn't* have died yesterday," Doc said testily, as if angrily trying to convince himself.

Dad, puzzled at something in the doctor's manner, waited in silence.

"I've seen many a corpse in my day," Doc grumbled, "but never a twenty-four-hour-old corpse that looked like this one."

He pulled down the sheet. And he thus revealed all that was left of the woman who'd been known as Appolonia Andreapolous.

A skeleton picked clean and white and bare, as if by buzzards.

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Science and Terror

FRITZ LEIBER'S "Alice" and her extraordinary allergy made us think of the recent cartoon concerning the ailing patient who is told by his nonplused doctor that, "most unfortunately," he is allergic to himself!

Maybe that's stretching things a bit too far, but Mr. Leiber says he's interested in the terrors that lurk behind the facade of modern medicine and science.

And as an editor of a scientific publication, Leiber has quite a vantage point for keeping in touch with such things.

He writes us further:

I was leafing through a recent issue of *The Journal of the American Medical Association* when I ran across an article about emergencies that arise in treating people for allergies. The good doctor was explaining about those one-in-a-million mishaps that occur despite the most careful precautions, and how the alert physician meets the danger successfully.

But, I found myself wondering, what if the efficient, white-coated physician came up against an emergency that he didn't know how to meet, that made even *his* competent fingers tremble, because it was a part of the black, shivery outside?

There's still a black, shivery outside, you know, in this Year of Our Lord 1946—a weird realm from which men shrink in terror. Science hasn't done away with it. Nothing ever will do away with it.

The cold goose-flesh has always risen pricklingly on man's neck when he thinks

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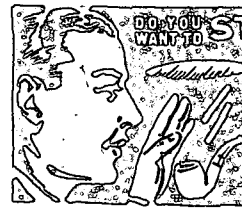

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he glimpses something out of the corner of his eye, something standing a little behind him, something that vanishes when he whirls around—but returns later in the evening.

All that science has done is given man a dozen new sets of eyes—and that makes it a great deal worse. For instance, there's the germ (if it is a germ) that is always swimming just outside the edge of the brightly lighted field of the microscope, that eludes even the electron microscope. There's the planet (if it is a planet and not some vast black sentient thing poised above the earth) that is seen out of the corner of the telescope's eye. There's the radar echo that doesn't seem to be coming quite from the moon, but somewhere else. There are the atomic glows that aren't just what the nuclear physicist expected. There's the buried thought that the psychologist can never quite reach, not even when he employs the hypno-analytic technique which can dredge up memories of events that occurred when the patient was six months old. (And is the buried thought a human thought, or a demon's?)

Finally, there's allergy. People can be allergic to the oddest things. Roses. Cats. Dust. Keys to bank vaults. (I've seen the uncanny photograph of the key-shaped inflammation raised by such a key on a sensitive individual's arm.) Aluminum shavings. Oysters. Nylon stockings. Yes, even allergic to themselves.

What if I created a hard-headed, intelligent, twentieth-century doctor, and then confronted him with an emergency that wasn't in the rule books, an emergency that almost smacked of the supernatural and that yet, you know, could actually happen. . . .

That's how my story, "Alice and the Allergy," got started.

Fritz Leiber.

NEW MEMBERS

Lloyd Adams, R. F. D. No. 1, Portville, New York
Herber Lebrer, 2185 Grand Concourse, Bronx 53, N. Y.
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P. L. Swanson, 6029 North Williams Ave., Portland, Oregon
Douglas Ekings, 1019 North Pennsylvania Ave., Morrisville, Pennsylvania
Irene M. Elsner, 104 Ashley St., Dayton 9, Ohio
Dick Hammond, 732 North Alta Vista, Hollywood 46, California
Herbert Nyland, 28 Parkhill Road, Webber, Germiston, Transvaal, South Africa
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Robert Dallman, 35 Maple St., Webster, Mass.
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Rex E. Ward, 719 Lomita, El Segundo, California
Dennis Strong, Box 682, Davidson College, Davidson, North Carolina
Bill Cook, 6331 South Arlington, Los Angeles 43, Calif.
Travis O. Willis, 517 Ballough Road, Daytona Beach, Florida
Pat Rehillard, Gold Bar, Washington

We're sorry that lack of space prevents the inclusion of the names of all New Members. The rest will appear next time.

READERS' VOTE

LOTTE	THE MACHINE
DAY OF JUDGMENT	SIX FLIGHTS TO TERROR
ENOCH	THE POLAR VORTEX
ALICE AND THE ALLERGY	THRESHOLD OF ENDURANCE
NOT HUMAN	XERXES' HUT
THE HORN	

Here's a list of eleven stories in this issue. Won't you let us know which three you consider the best? Just place the numbers: 1, 2, and 3 respectively against your three favorite tales—then clip it out and send it to us.

WEIRD TALES

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